GROUSE - THE TURN OF THE TIDE by Richard Waddington

The SHOOTING TIMES
and Country Magazine

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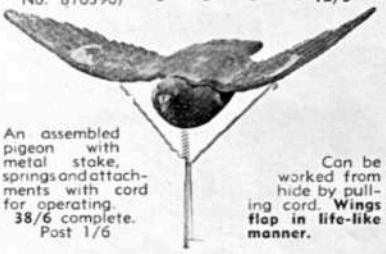

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OUT OF TRAINING

THE recent track performances of the new mile world record holder Derek Ibbotson have been the subject of Press criticism. Fear that this superlative athlete will overwork himself has been voiced in many quarters, but in our opinion, shared, we believe, by the subject of the critics himself, constant practice is the only way to maintain a peak performance—and indeed, to improve upon it.

This is certainly true of shooting. And it is a regrettable thought that, with a new season about to open in three days' time, a number of shooting men will be ill-fitted to do justice to themselves, their hosts, or to the birds which promise so well.

Whether his concern is grouse or pheasants, partridges or duck, there is nothing more frustrating for host or keeper than to see his well preserved and well presented birds too regularly missed by a team of guns incompetent or, more likely, out of form. He may console himself with the thought that his birds live to fly another day, but his aim—and an economic necessity perhaps—is to put a reasonable number of birds shown in the bag. He cannot do this without the straight shooting cooperation of his guests and they cannot play their part if they are out of practice.

Shooting practice is available in two ways, the one more expensive than the other. The shooting school with its clay pigeons and expert instruction provides the quick and concentrated answer. The longer course, and to our mind the more useful and attractive, is to keep eyes and muscles attuned by shooting pigeon and vermin throughout the fence months. Both presume the necessary money, time and opportunity on the part of the shooter. However, those with little of each at their disposal can still prepare themselves for the early rigours of the season in the simplest ways.

In older days the "regular"—almost professional—shots took pains to keep themselves in trim by taking regular exercise, pointing walking sticks at imaginary targets, and flexing their shooting muscles in various ways. Nowadays few seem to bother, though there are some known to us who, a week or two before the opening day, condition themselves for the climbs and walks ahead by striding ever increasing distances across country. These are the sensible ones, for they know that stiff and weary limbs and aching joints are not only drawbacks to good shooting, but also spoil the enjoyment of the day. They know too, that even the best fitting gun weighs heavy if it has not been handled for some time, and wisely put in a little handling practice in readiness.

Nor does the sensible shooting man forget his dog. Just as hound exercise occupies a hunt staff during the summer months, so should regular gundog exercise receive the attention of owner or handler, for the neglected spaniel or retriever gets out of condition even more quickly than its master.

Although it is always a mistake to take the sport of shooting too seriously, in the competitive sense, to make the most of it calls for fitness and adequate preparation.

It is now too late for the dilatory grouse shooter to do much about it, but those who wait for September I have still time to start and to complete their simple training programme.

THE SHOOTING TIMES AND COUNTRY MAGAZINE

Official Organ of THE WILDFOWLERS' ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

No. 3909 FRIDAY, AUGUST 9, 1957 Founded 1882

The wild life of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust. We must account for it to those who come after.—King George VI.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Myxomatosis

Although fully aware that the rabbit flea is the prime vector of myxomatosis in this country, I have often wondered, especially since recent reported outbreaks of the disease in widely separated areas, how the disease was transmitted, for a flea's hop is limited and it has always been my impression that any sort of flea lost no time in leaving a dead body.

Some of the answers to mine and other readers' queries are contained in the recently published report of last year's technical meeting, at Edinburgh, of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources.

A footnote to the Myxomatosis Report points out that infected fleas can remain alive for a week on the bodies of dead, myxomatous rabbits, and are thus liable to be carried off to a great distance, not only by man, but also by birds which occasionally feed on carrion (buzzards, crows, magpies, gulls).

The note concludes with the observation that *Larus marinus* is suspected of having thus introduced myxomatosis to the island of Skomer.

Larus marinus, translated, reveals itself as the great black-backed gull.

The Art of Angling

Although I appeared to be the only shooting man in a room full of anglers when I went to a cocktail party given by the Caxton Publishing Company on Friday, July 26, this was no reason for feeling "out of it." There were too many old friends and acquaintances there for that, many of whom I had not seen since *Anglers News* days, and some of whom, although well-known to me in print or on the telephone, I was meeting for the first time.

The occasion was to celebrate the publication of a three volume work entitled "The Art of Angling," and having seen the books, superbly presented, beautifully illustrated, excellently written and arranged, covering every aspect of angling from A to Z, I have no hesitation in pronouncing them a major landmark in the history of British angling literature.

A full review of "The Art of Angling" will appear elsewhere in this journal in due course.

Salmon Glut

During the past few weeks there has been a heavy glut of salmon in Ireland, and on one occasion the price on the Dublin market dropped to as low as 2/10 per lb. Anglers are not, of course, concerned with the marketing arrangements for fish, but at the same time, one cannot help feeling that there are certain implications in situations of this nature which call for serious consideration by angling associations and others interested in the preservation of Irish angling facilities.

In very low water conditions such as have been experienced for some weeks recently, the salmon entering all the major rivers tend to congregate in shoals in estuary waters where the majority of the fish destined for the market are normally taken in nets.

From the net men's point of view nothing could be finer, and apparently for some, the more fish taken the better. I have heard of one river from which approximately 400 fish were netted on one tide alone, and of others where the take has been in the neighbourhood of 1,000 fish per day.

Is not this a rather shortsighted policy on the part of the owners of such net fisheries? Surely it would be much wiser from every point of view to keep the take at reasonable levels at all times thus ensuring not only a fair price for the netsmen, but also more sport for the anglers upstream and increased numbers of potential spawning fish for the rivers blessed with such excellent runs.

Doves and Dope

As we know only too well, protectionists the world over drum up all sorts of phoney evidence in support of their claims. In an attempt to secure complete protection of mourning doves in the state of Illinois, some of the "antis" went so far as to tell the Senators that the birds help to control marijuana by eating marijuana seeds Fortunately commonsense prevailed, and a bill to end the shooting of these doves was killed in the light of more reasoned statements submitted by shooting men.

Cover Picture

Our cover picture this week shows the Prime Minister (then Chancellor of the Exchequer) with the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire and other guns on their way to the first drive over Broad Park Top Moors at Bolton Abbey last year.

Mr. Macmillan, an enthusiastic and good shot, has been going to Bolton Abbey for more than 30 seasons. He will be shooting there again this year.

AUCEPS.

COMING EVENTS . . .

by Tower-Bird

IN days gone by, I had my share of ride-trimming, a job which can be easy and pleasant, or very much otherwise. To trim well-kept rides is child's play, but when you come to a neglected wood in which the rides have become overgrown, and, in some cases, all but indiscernible, because they have not been cut-back for a season or two, "trimming" is hardly the word for it!

I can remember such a wood in which I spent a week or two with saw, slasher, and hook, and during almost all that time, the sun blazed down from a cloudless sky, and flies and other insects drove me all but mad, with their humming and their stings. The wood was nearly two miles from the nearest village and place of refreshment, and, except for evening sessions, and very occasionally a run down with the bike at mid-day, my only liquid assets came from a small, clear spring which ran through the wood, and contained, here and there, the decomposed body of a rabbit or a bird. But that water, when one's throat was parched with drought and dust, was nectar of the gods, and, to wipe the sweat from one's streaming face, and then fling oneself down to drink and wash was nothing short of heavenly relief.

I thought of those days this week-end when I made a tour of several old bits of rough shooting I have, and which I had not visited for some weeks. One of these places consists mainly of grassland run wild, and has become one glorified bramble-patch. The bramble-bushes have grown so high and wide that many of them are the size of a modern four-roomed bungalow. Many of them have joined up, so that one can no longer pass between them until one has cut a way with a hook.

Nature Takes Over

But, in the course of my occasional wanderings here, I have kept open one or two twisting, narrow paths. Or, rather, I had. When I visited this place for the first time after the recent storms, I was surprised to find how many trailing brambles were set across my path. At almost every yard a red-brown thick trailer barred my way, or a younger, more tender green one, not yet "fixed" to both sides, gave way reluctantly to the weight of my thrusting body, thighs, or legs. Thistles and nettles had grown up on either side of the just-discernible path, and the whole five or six acres of the place were almost unrecognisable, so rapidly had nature "taken over."

Happily, I always carry a sharp, double-edged skinning-knife, and with this in hand, I was able to clear the various paths. No doubt a great deal of this growth would never have pushed its way up had the former stock of rabbits survived myxomatosis, but a few rabbits are getting back there. And I must say that it is a miniature bird sanctuary for warblers, etc. I came across a late-hatched young cuckoo which seemed to be fed by three or four foster-mothers.

Marshland Track

On the following day I did another job of light ride- or path-trimming, this time on a rough acreage of marsh, and again to clear a path which I frequently use when duck and pigeon shooting. In this case, a single path leads between two stretches of water, and the recent rains had caused it completely to vanish, for this small jungle was now pathless, where, a week or two ago, I had a well-beaten track winding through it.

Now I waded shoulder-high through graceful reeds and less graceful masses of nettles, burrs, and teasels. The whole rough surface of the place was a mass of flowering pink rose-bay willowherb; yellow yarrow and shepherd's rod; kingweed; purple vetch; and white-clouded meadowsweet—with half a score of other prominent and often colourful herbage. Here twisted strands of convolvulous and creeping strands of ground-close brambles were laid to trip the unwary.

I could, and maybe I should have gone off home for a hook, or brought one down on another occasions, but I did not want to make this path too obvious, for I use it as a series of "stands" when flighting mallard in September, sitting, squatting, and often standing in a screen of more than head-high rushes, with one eye open for approaching birds, and the other watching the countless spiders and other insects making webs or creeping among the tassel-like heads of the gently swaying reeds. It is here that swallows and martins hawk for insects during the evenings, missing one's head by inches, as their beaks snap, presently (i.e. the swallows) flinging themselves into the reeds for their nightly roost.

Now I drew my skinning-knife with its razor-edged sides and cut only certain growth—those tripping strands of "winny-wine" and bramble; chopping off the thistles, burrs, and some of the reddening dock-heads, but leaving the more innocent cover and the teasels, for I am curiously fond of the blue stain of that prickly fellow in flower.

As The Season Approaches

As duck shooting approaches, coming events cast their shadows before. Out on the marshes these evenings the plover have collected into flocks of from a hundred to twice that number, and, with the mallard of the year, they fly exercises long before the recognised flight-time at dusk. Here, one sees at first a couple or three families of plover; then others join them, and soon a flock is born which one may find feeding in a certain area of upland by day, but always standing or playing aerobatics over the same bit of marsh by the late afternoon. Except for an occasional call of an old bird there is a surprising silence about these early flocks.

Later, in September, as I sit in my hide waiting for the mallard to flight, the plover will fly madly all around and about me, their broad vanes making sounds like the rustling or tearing of stiff paper. Then, they will call all the time; not the joyful call of the courting season, but rather with a shriller, wilder, more sorrowful cry peculiar to the autumn and winter months. Often enough, when I have had my duck decoys out on a pool of flood-water at dusk, several hundreds of plover have flown down with mad twists and turns, crying loudly, to land like a frieze round the edge of the water, there to stand head to wind, birds occasionally rising to fly round crying, then dropping to the ground once more. One minute the whole flock is as restless as the waves of the sea; a few minutes later they are standing dead still like several hundred models of plover, silent and apparently fast asleep.

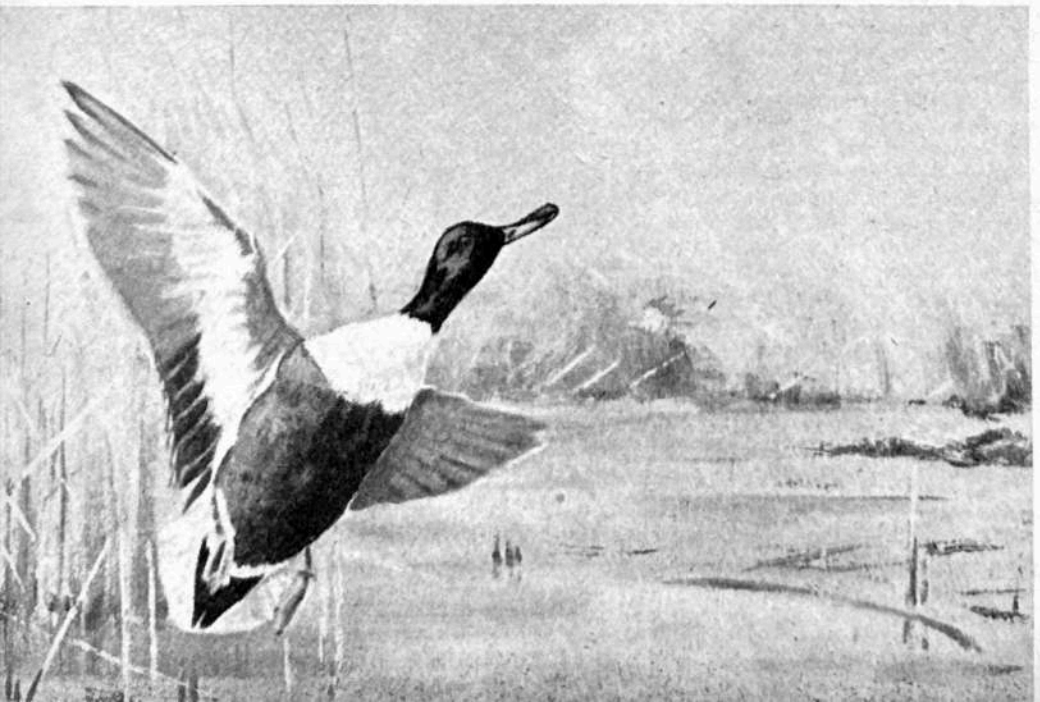
Other "coming events" are anticipated in the low-flying starlings, gradually amalgamating into large flocks, which, with loudly whispering wings, sweep across the marsh in late afternoon, or, on a calm day, pass over high like small black clouds.

Likewise, the swallows and "making them ready to fly," in that family parties are ganging up into sweeping flocks which chase the insect hatch, or sit like notes of music along the telephone wires, for ever busily searching among their feathers, seemingly for little followers, as we used to call them before the term "fellow travellers" came into vogue. Screaming parties of black swifts race down the village street, all out; or circle high and gracefully in the slowly dying light of a calm evening.

There are undoubtedly young pigeon about, but I have not shot one this year. I cannot help thinking that pigeon are breeding later these days. I am sure that we used to shoot young ones (and certainly I used to take squabs from the nest) while pheasants were still in crops on the rearing-field. Similarly, it seems to me that we shoot far more young pigeon at harvest time, and by "young" I infer birds recently out of the squab stage.

Two mornings ago, when walking beside a reed-bed, I was surprised to see a single brightly-plumaged duck fly up and depart without hurry. The bird was a drake shoveler, the first I have seen of the species since last shooting season. I suppose it has a duck and young somewhere, though I'll swear they did not hatch unknown "under my nose." I suspect that they came from the other side of the river, where recently hay-making has been carried out on a large scale, right down to the edge of the high-tide mark.

A shoveler rattles up from a reed-bed . . .



GROUSE
THE TURN OF THE TIDE

by Richard Waddington

IT is pleasant to be able to read that over a large part of the Eastern Highlands the season which is upon us is likely to prove the best since the war; and indeed probably comparable with some of the best of those halcyon years 1922-1939 which to many of us have seemed like a forgotten dream.

I do not suppose that there has ever been recorded a series of such disastrous grouse seasons as those of 1953-1955; and to many of us the enormous improvement of 1956 seemed like a miracle. A fabulous breeding season following a mild winter allowed a small, but entirely disease-free stock to regenerate itself to a remarkable degree. 1956 was a year of recovery on all those moors where the basic principles of good grouse management were practised. 1957 will begin to produce the harvest. Were it not for the fact that so many owners, despairing of the future, have allowed their shootings to fall into disuse and disrepair, I would willingly hazard that 1958 will be (given always a reasonable nesting season) a near record. But it must always be remembered that Donne's famous lines "Ask not for whom the bell tolls . . ." apply equally to the race of grouse as to that of man. If your neighbour's birds die you will lose many of yours—to him! It is impossible for a well stocked, well tended moor surrounded by uncared for and neglected ground ever to be better than average. The moment the weight of birds becomes heavy the surplus goes to fill the vacuum all round.

It is my impression that many shooting men, owners, tenants and, alas, even keepers, do not fully understand the basic principles of what constitutes good grouse moor management. This falls into three general headings. The ground, the care of the stock and finally the stock itself.

Good Grouse Ground

On the first of these there is little disagreement. Good grouse ground is easily recognised. It affords besides heather, a variety of berries and grasses, water, and an abundance of insect life. And it must be "farmed" as carefully as the best agricultural holdings of the eastern counties. Young grouse *must* have short young heather (largely because a small bird, which eats heather at 24 hours old cannot reach the shoots in old heather plants). Burning in rotation is the number one priority. A neglected grouse moor will require about 20 years of hard burning before it can be got into proper rotation and full production. This is expensive and for a start an unrewarding effort and is the reason why many moors allowed to become neglected are probably lost for ever.

I think, too, that few will disagree with the generally accepted principles for the care of grouse stocks. Vermin must be destroyed, and this means that a large number of men must be employed to do it. I am not sure that it is generally realised quite how much damage even a limited amount of vermin can do on a grouse moor. I would not be over-estimating the effect in stating that every fox at large on a well-stocked moor costs at least 300 brace of birds per year. On my own moors where 14 keepers are employed and on which it is generally impossible to find the trace of a fox between May and November, we kill every winter and spring about 40 foxes—all animals which have come in from outside our boundaries!

Every pair of hooded or carrion crows and every pair of ravens probably accounts for 50 brace of grouse. And besides these, the main enemies, we have eagles (I have seen an eagle's nest with the remains of no less than 82 grouse, all killed within a week, on which the eaglets were perching!) and the lesser evils such as wild cats, stoats, weasels, peregrines and common cats. Good grouse ground even though well burnt cannot produce a reasonable bag unless the vermin is killed. This means, in effect, that you cannot have grouse without keepers.

Nor, it is generally agreed, can you achieve optimum results on the best grouse moors unless they are driven and not walked. Though many will not accept this, I say that by never walking up, but only by driving, it is impossible on any grouse moor to overshoot. If the birds are not there in sufficient quantity to provide a worthwhile bag you obviously stop driving. If you drive too often the birds will, temporarily, leave. But if, because driving gives poor results you start walking-up, you may very well succeed in producing fair enough bags at the expense of your stock for years to come.

I well remember some years ago bringing in a good drive on one of my best beats on a late August afternoon for about six birds. My guests one and all opined that, not only were there no grouse on the ground, but that there could not be any for several years as there was no stock. This irritated me, and foolishly I asked them to walk back over the drive shooting in line. In the matter of half a mile the line of eight guns killed 27 brace on ground that the beaters had just driven. This was my stock. We paid for this foolishness in the years to come. As long as I kept to driving the stock, small though it was, was safe. Walking up immediately destroyed it. Nothing is so fatal to a good driving moor as to allow it to be walked in a poor season.

On the question of what constitutes a proper grouse stock there will be little agreement. I know that my head will be in the lion's mouth—but no matter.

A Proper Grouse Stock

Stock is the most important single asset on a grouse moor. But numbers have little to do with the value of stock. It is quality that is important. By quality I mean birds which are relatively free of infestation by the nematode *Strongylus pergracilis* — the strongyle worm which causes grouse disease. Virtually every grouse is the host, from upwards of a few to thousands of these parasites, and in general terms the younger the bird the less infested it is—and in consequence, the less infectious it is to other birds. The main problem in stock management is not to keep *up* the numbers of birds, but to keep *down* the numbers of strongyle nematodes of the area. The only way in which this can be achieved is to keep the stock young.

If now we look at a beat which in the past has averaged 300 brace, we may reasonably expect that, at a normal reproductive rate (for Scotland anyway) of 1½-1, a stock of about 200 pairs is required. On a well managed driving moor these 400 birds will break up into approximately 200 first season, 100 second season and 100 third and upwards season birds. Since, as we have said, strongyle infestation is progressive with age, if we take the "unit" of infestation in young birds as say, 1 we may roughly take that of second year birds as 2 and that of third year as 3, etc. So our total nematode stock lies at a factor of 200 (first year birds) plus 200 (second year birds) plus say 400 (third and upwards birds)—a total of 800. If this is the degree of infestation that the beat will stand without producing epidemic "disease" then we must see that it does not exceed this figure.

Suppose now that we have a disastrous nesting season with virtually no young birds. The tendency is not to shoot. Fatal. What now happens to our stock. We are now left with:

200 second season birds	—disease factor	400
100 third "	" "	300
100 fourth and upwards	" (say)	500
	Total	1200

(Continued on page 631, col. 3)

GUN GOSSIP

by North Country

THE game shot who does not enjoy a chance to shoot pigeon or vermin during the close season will be well advised to pay a visit to one of the well-equipped shooting schools before he shoots his first (of the season) grouse or partridges—if only to get his eye in. If he is a good shot, he may be excused for thinking there is no need for this pre-season practice, that it is just a rather expensive luxury which can be dispensed with and no harm done. There may be no need, he may go and shoot his early grouse and partridges with all his old skill. But I think it is always a good idea or a sound little investment or insurance, if he will engage in a little clay pigeon practice during the early August period. The few pounds will not be wasted.

Most of us, however good we may be, need tuning up at this season. Since January we have developed some rough edges—a few creases to be ironed out. It is surely better to buy your way out of this than to delay in the false hope you will be one hundred per cent on the opening day. You won't be! and in the meantime precious birds will have got away—perhaps not to be seen again. But a little shooting will suffice to put you on your mettle and prepare you for at least some of the tricks which may be anticipated. Shooting is not necessarily difficult. Not at all—for it is possible to strike an even patch and make a good showing. But we all need to get used to our guns again. And you know, though we may keep them clean and free from rust, we may not *handle* them nearly enough. I attach much importance to this inter-season handling, it helps to keep the appropriate muscles in healthy trim and feet and body in a nimble state.

There are disadvantages in keeping valuable guns in some sort of rack. In the ordinary modern house (where space is at a premium) if guns cannot be kept in a cabinet (and even cabinets take up room), they are probably best put safely away in their cases— the latter being placed in a dry cupboard or a dry room.

The One Drawback

I have, however, already pointed out the disadvantage of this. And the point is that where a gun or guns are kept in an open rack there is the great advantage that they can be picked up at any moment—without the fumbling for or insertion of a key. From the point-of-view of the man who means to keep his eye in during the close season, this is ideal. I know an *office* where a gun is so kept in the managing director's room. That man is a very useful shot. What I do not like about it is that anyone can pick up that gun—with all the drawbacks that this entails. A shooting acquaintance used to keep all his guns and rifles in a low rack in the entrance hall of his house, so that they were always at hand. No protection, of course, but most handy for practice and shooting. This man was an excellent all-round shot and seldom seemed to have a gun out of his hand. I am sure that there was some affinity between the two.

All the same I do not like to see a pair of best guns exposed in this way to all who come and go. Apart from the ever-present risk of theft it is so easy for slight damage to be incurred. Of course this would never do where children are allowed the *freedom* of the house. By and large, I think probably the best way in all likely circumstances is to keep an old gun, but one that fits, in such a place, so that handling and practice are faciltated at no excessive risk to the owner. Constant handling is the best answer, I am sure—particularly where shooting practice is not available. Lord Walsingham always had a gun *by his desk* in the close season.

The virtual demise of the rabbit is a sad blow for the rising shot. He cannot now be sent out to the warren or whatever it is to get all the practice possible, at the same time killing off some of the rabbits and replenishing the larder at this time of roaring prices. He, too, then must spend more time at the shooting school and practice at inanimate targets. But the greatest tragedy lies where actual sport in the field was at rabbits. There are very many cases of this and a satisfactory answer to them will take a lot of finding!

Wildfowling Clubs

The Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland: Hon. Secretary, Lt.-Commdr. J. W. Anderton, R.N.V.R., 19 Castle Street, Liverpool, 2.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

1957 No. 1015

WILD BIRDS

The Wild Birds (Wicken Sedge Fen Sanctuary) Order, 1957

Made - - - 13th June, 1957
Coming into Operation 1st July, 1957

In pursuance of the powers conferred on me by subsection (1) of section three and subsection (1) of section thirteen of the Protection of Birds Act, 1954(**a**). I hereby make the following Order:—

1. The area specified in the Schedule to this Order (hereafter in this Order referred to as the "Wicken Sedge Fen sanctuary") shall be a bird sanctuary, and the following provisions of this Order shall have effect with respect thereto.

2. Subject to the provisions of the Act, any person who, within the Wicken Sedge Fen sanctuary, at any time wilfully kills, injures or takes, or attempts to kill, injure or take, any wild bird shall be guilty of an offence against the Act.

3. Subject to the provisions of the Act, any person who, within the Wicken Sedge Fen sanctuary, wilfully takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird shall be guilty of an offence against the Act.

4. Where any person in the Wicken Sedge Fen sanctuary does any act which by virtue of Article 2 or 3 of this Order is an offence against the Act he shall be liable to a special penalty.

5. So much of the Wild Birds Protection (Cambridgeshire) Order, 1953(**b**), as is in force immediately before the coming into operation of this Order and relates to the area specified in the second paragraph of the Schedule to the said Order of 1953 (being the paragraph therein headed "Wicken Sedge Fen") is hereby revoked.

6.—(1) In this Order the expression "the Act" means the Protection of Birds Act, 1954.

(2) The Interpretation Act, 1889(**c**), shall apply to the interpretation of this Order as it applies to the interpretation of an Act of Parliament.

7. This Order may be cited as the Wild Birds (Wicken Sedge Fen Sanctuary) Order, 1957, and shall come into operation on the first day of July, 1957.

R. A. Butler,
One of Her Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State.

Home Office,
Whitehall.
13th June, 1957.

(**a**) 2 & 3 Eliz. 2. c. 30. (**b**) S.I. 1953/1225.
(**c**) 52 & 53 Vict. c. 63.

Article 1 SCHEDULE

THE WICKEN SEDGE FEN SANCTUARY

That part of the rural district of Newmarket bounded by a line starting at the junction of Breed Fen Drove and Spinney Drove and running thence south-westwards and westwards along the southern edge of Spinney Drove to the junction, approximately eleven hundred and sixty feet to the east of the western end of Spinney Drove, of Spinney Drove with the dyke which runs generally southwards from Spinney Drove to Wicken Lode, thence generally southwards along the eastern bank of the said dyke to its junction with Wicken Lode, thence straight to the nearest point on the southern bank of Wicken Lode, thence south-eastwards along the southern bank of Wicken Lode to its junction with Reach Lode, thence south-eastwards along the northern banks of Reach Lode and Burwell Lode to the point thereon due south of the south-western corner of the parcel numbered 45 on the Ordnance Survey Plan (Edition of 1926) Cambridgeshire, sheet XXXV 6, thence straight to the said south-western corner, thence north-eastwards along the north-western boundary of the said parcel to Harrison's Drove, then south-eastwards along the south-western edge of Harrison's Drove to the point thereon opposite the southern corner of the parcel numbered 60 on the Ordnance Survey Plan (Edition of 1926) Cambridgeshire sheet XXXV 7, thence straight to the said southern corner and thence north-eastwards along the south-eastern boundaries of the said parcel numbered 60 and of the parcels numbered 59, 58, 57 and 67a on the last-mentioned Plan to the southern bank of Monks Lode, thence generally eastwards along the southern bank of Monks Lode to its junction with The Weights, then generally westwards along the southern and western banks of The Weights to the north-eastern corner of the parcel numbered 474 on the last-mentioned Plan, thence westwards along the northern boundary of the said parcel to the western end thereof, thence straight to the southern corner of the parcel numbered 322 on the said Plan, thence north-eastwards and north-westwards along the south-eastern and north-eastern boundaries of the said parcel to the northern corner thereof, thence straight to the nearest point on the south-eastern boundary of the parcel numbered 263 on the Ordnance Survey Plan (Edition of 1926) Cambridgeshire sheet XXXV 3, thence in a north-easterly direction along the said south-eastern boundary to Breed Fen Drove, thence in a north-westerly direction along the south-western edge of Breed Fen Drove to the starting point aforesaid.

EXPLANATORY NOTE

(This Note is not part of the Order, but is intended to indicate its general purport.)

This Order revokes and replaces that part of the Wild Birds Protection (Cambridgeshire) Order, 1953, which applies to Wicken Sedge Fen, and was continued in force by the Protection of Birds Act, 1954. Article 1 establishes a bird sanctuary with boundaries different in some respects from the sanctuary area established under the Order of 1953. Articles 2 and 3 make the actions there specified offences against the Protection of Birds Act, 1954. Under Article 4 these offences will be punishable by the special penalty provided for in the Act for the more serious offences thereunder.

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1957
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* * *

The Kent Wildfowlers' Association held a most successful meeting at the Crayford Gun Club on July 20, by kind permission of Mr. E. T. Churchill, who also presented the Association with 200 cartridges for his chief instructor, Mr. M. T. Clark to demonstrate and teach us with.

Three "guinea pigs" were chosen from the 40 members present and Mr. Clark kept his audience enthralled for a couple of hours, starting with gun fitting, before we toured various stands and watched the guinea pigs being put through their paces and noted the truly remarkable progress produced by Mr. Clark's skill. From his opening remark after the first shot from Guinea Pig No. I that he had done a lot of rifle-shooting (quite right) to instructions to Guinea Pig No. II who had just missed five "high birds" in succession, to aim to deliberately miss behind with the result that he then never missed again, we soon recognised Mr. Clark for the wizard that he is, spotting the faults immediately. The wizard gave a demonstration of footwork on "crossing birds" breaking the clay with the first shot and pulverising the largest remaining piece a moment later with his second barrel, a feat which he repeated twice more at which one member was heard to remark "That's not just footwork, that's darn good shooting!"

Several members stayed on to shoot after the demonstration had ended and we all returned home full of good intentions "to shoot quickly slowly" a maxim of Mr. Clark's, which he had impressed on us all during a really memorable afternoon.

Grey squirrels are on the increase in East Sussex. Already nearly 10,000 have been killed this year. But the number killed is not likely to reach the peak figure of 32,436 in East Sussex during 1954, the first year the Ministry of Agriculture paid 1s. a tail for every grey squirrel killed.

Mr. I. Rudd-Clarke, county pest officer, said that the total for this year will probably be in the region of 16,000 or 17,000.

In 1955 there was a sharp drop in numbers killed and 11,155 tails were handed in.

Last year the amount per tail was doubled to 2s. and 12,239 tails were handed in. So far this year the figure is well over 9,000.

Since March, 1953, 93,895 squirrels have been killed in East Sussex.

Fencing posts being made as the timber is extracted.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

WHEN a keeper in the good old days of intensive game preservation took up a post on another estate, he spent some time at first in studying the layout of the coverts, and estimating by a shrewd appraisal of their composition how valuable they might be for providing sport. A keeper still does this, of course, but without the same confidence. Nowadays he cannot tell whether the coverts will stand as they are for long or not. Home-grown timber has become a commodity of national importance; so woodlands may suddenly become useless for holding game. Even if they are not opened out drastically by thinning and brush-clearing operations, they are liable to be brushed, until one can see right through them.

In the good old days, however, the keeper could generally feel certain that the interests of game would be considered to the utmost by the landowner. I would not say that the coverts were allowed to go to rack and ruin from the forester's point of view; but thinning was done judiciously, and undercover was planted, whenever necessary, to prevent that excessive openness which is characteristic of most woodland today, and particularly of the conifer stands. Furthermore, no disturbance was permitted in those byegone coverts, which might interfere adversely with the nesting and resting of game. And this consideration gave the keeper a tremendous enthusiasm for his work. He felt that the coverts were as much under his charge as the game which they held.

Taking Stock of New Coverts

So, I say, a keeper took stock of his new coverts with a professional and authoritative eye. First of all he had a look through the main covert, which usually surrounded the mansion house. He noted the amount and distribution of the undercover, especially at the recognised rises. And he made mental plans for fresh rises that might offer more sport, or at least make the beating more of a straightforward operation than it had been under the direction of his predecessor. Then he would see how much ride space was available for holding coops; and if it did not fit in with his ambitions, he would try to persuade the landowner to extend it by felling a few trees where extra glades did not spoil the amenities of the policies. He might also have suggested to his new employer that shelter belts of spruce or other quick-growing cover ought to be planted to break the prevailing wind.

Ultimately the keeper's inspection took in all the coverts on the estate. Most of them probably remained as they were; but some of the birch thickets might have had, on his advice, broad rides cut through them to facilitate rabbit shooting. And if the estate were inclined to be hilly, he might have suggested sites for completely fresh plantations to make better shooting in conjunction with established coverts at a lower level. I know quite a number of hillside plantations which would not have existed without the collaboration of a keen shooting man and his keen keeper. Meanwhile, the forester probably knew nothing of the new keeper's intentions, until he was summoned one day to hear them from his employer.

Forester and Keeper

Today, as I hinted at the beginning of this article, the system formerly practised on intensively preserved estates which allowed the landowner and the keeper to discuss the management of woodlands without consulting the forester, excepting insofar as that was necessary to get work done, has gone out of date; and on estates which are dedicated officially to timber production it is even more out of date, if that is possible. In cases of that sort the keeper simply has no say in the matter at all. He is not even second fiddle to the forester. He has not got a fiddle; and only a resourceful man can produce and show game in those circumstances.

It is also true, we must admit, that neither the landowner nor the forester has autocratic power in the woodlands of a dedicated estate. They take their major orders from officials who are presumably experts in the realm of scientific timber production. These officials map out planting programmes, then examine them when they are completed; and they dictate the rate and extent of thinning in semi-mature woodlands. Probably they decide when a forest must be clear felled; but I am not quite sure on that point. However, they are the men behind the scenes, and they must be obeyed, otherwise the landowner loses his financial grants.

The result of all this is that the keeper now goes round the estate in a mood of sombre expectancy, unless someone is kind enough to give him warning of forestry operations. If he is left to discover these changes for himself, he perhaps finds a man with a billhook marking trees in a favourite covert one day. A few weeks later he arrives at a scene of intense activity in the same place. A number of brawny strangers, the employees of a timber contractor, are knocking down trees at full speed. They have no time to give him more than a glance; for they are being paid at the rate of so much per cubic foot, and every moment has a cash value.

Processed Timber

While the felling is in progress, another team with caterpillar tractors are hauling the logs to a place which can be conveniently reached by portable saws and peeling machines. In due course the men with these machines appear, and for several weeks the despoiled covert echoes with their racket. Pitprops, peeled and ready for action, are piled up in great dumps with fencing posts, and other processed timber. Finally the big wagons arrive to remove the lot, and leave behind swathes of brushwood to harbour rabbits, enormous ruts and holes to hold water, and heaps of sawdust and bark.

During this period of upset, pheasants and woodcock have probably forsaken the covert. If it has happened at nesting time, well, that is just too bad for the keeper's prospects; if it has happened while he was feeding mature pheasants in some shady nook, he might be able to gather together some of them after the woodmen have departed; but the chances are that the seclusion of the covert has been destroyed, and the shady nook where the pheasants foregathered is likely to be an unrecognisable jumble of matted brushwood and mud among bushes broken down and ruined by the impact of felled trees and tractors.

All this ruthless efficiency, this thinning and clear felling of game coverts at any time of the year with a consequent mess which looks like the result of a bombardment, has, however, a profound effect on the layman. There can be no doubt about that. Some time ago I had some conversation with one, and he praised highly the present day management of woodlands on a Scottish estate. He pointed out how the coverts had been thinned repeatedly in the last few years, so that they were rapidly reaching a state when they might produce a marvellous main crop. He was also full of praises for several newly-created conifer plantations. According to him, forestry of this kind had never been known in former times.

I did not dampen his enthusiasm; but I happened to know that all the conifer woodlands on that estate, which are apparently now producing valuable timber, were planted within the first three decades of this century at the instigation of a keen shooting man and his head-keeper. No professional forester had a say in the project. The trees were ordered by the factor, and the actual work, except the fencing, was done by unskilled men. I do not know how much time was spent in weeding and in filling blanks among those trees during the first years of their existence, but I should think that they were left mainly to fend for themselves. Nevertheless, they made first-class timber, and two or three of the older coverts were clear felled at the beginning of the war. So it is obvious that the production of timber and the production of game in the same place are quite compatible. Even now we learn that the Forestry Commission has wakened up to the fact that deer may be more of an asset than a nuisance, if they are cultivated wisely.

Let us hope that this *volte-face* will ultimately extend to other kinds of game, and that even dedicated estates will be allowed to have efficient coverts, instead of conglomerations of bare poles under an unbroken canopy.

. . . the more flamboyant clothes displayed by overseas shooting men.

The Young Shot

Clothes on the Range

by Petrel

"MUMMY, what are all those men in funny clothes?"

"Ssh, darling, I think they're Americans. It must be an American camp or something."

Thus the conversation outside Bisley Camp, Brookwood, England, on a sunny fore-noon during small-bore week, and thus the typical reaction among the uninitiated nowadays, whenever men are seen "in funny clothes."

Not that this is altogether surprising, for the soberly—some say dully—dressed inhabitants of these islands have never ceased to wonder at the more flamboyant clothes displayed by some of the Transatlantic migrants, but in the small-bore shooting fashion world, at last, I doubt whether the descendants of Daniel Boone would attract more attention than their British counterparts.

Rather, from what I saw on the ranges that day, they would have been totally eclipsed by the riot of colour and pattern provided by the various and varied multi-hued jackets, hats, and badges sported by the competitors of both sexes on that occasion.

Most significant was the amount of clothing worn by almost every rifleman. There was I on one of the hottest days this year sweltering in open-necked, lightweight shirt and slacks, and there were they, calm, collected and apparently cool in one or more sweaters topped by a shooting coat of one weight or another, but hardly in keeping with the climate. And with very good reason, so it transpired.

The Slightest Difference

High-class marksmen such as were present on this day realise that the correct clothing is important to good shooting. The slightest deviation from the usual can make a difference of several all-important points. It is a reflection on our climate that the usual uniform implies at least one sweater beneath a shooting jacket, and just how greatly a fraction of an inch less or more of wool at the shoulder can affect a man's performance or, equally important, his confidence, is reflected by the fact that a free rifle shooter will go so far as to wear a sweater for his standing shoot and then discard it when he comes to fire his kneeling target.

This emphasises that all the pads and leather-work which adorn their jackets are there for good reason and not merely, as is sometimes supposed, for show.

Although on the face of it the clothing of American and British shotgunners is very different, basically it has been designed with the same objects in view. The essential requirements are comfort, warmth (or coolness), weather resistance and a colour that blends with most backgrounds. It is only in the last respect that American ideas differ largely from ours, and although we may tend to scoff, I daresay that given similar larger game shooting facilities, we should be glad to wear anything which made us look less like a white-tailed deer.

Badges and Hats

In rough shooting and wildfowling clothing departments I have little doubt that the American sporting couturier is ahead of ours, though for the more formal shooting occasion our clothes, like our guns, are without equal. In the matter of badges, trophies, and the like, the American target shooter is no more of a peacock than his opposite number in this country. For confirmation, visit Bisley or any clay pigeon shooting meeting.

The game and rough shooter is not badge conscious which is hardly surprising, since badges as worn by pistoleers, riflemen and clay pigeon shots are emblems of prowess in competition, while the competitive spirit is—or should be—absent from any field sport. Nevertheless, there are some who look upon any type of shooting in the light of a needle match, and only recently a friend wrote that he had been horrified at the behaviour of a fellow gun whose one ambition seemed to be to get his shot off before his host, almost regardless of the range, in an attempt to wipe his eye.

It has ever been a British trait to eschew ostentation and this is reflected in shooting clothes and hats, which, compared with Continental sporting apparel are singularly drab. We may allow ourselves a discreet pin feather in the hat band or the curly tail of a mallard drake, but we shrink from bedecking our headgear with more badges than the bonnet of a vintage motor car, in the manner of some foreign sportsmen.

Either way the choice is purely personal. A gaily garnished hat can give its wearer confidence and indirectly promote goodwill and good public relations between sportsmen and those ignorant critics who already consider us as mad as hatters.

Decoys and Shine

And now to ostentation of a different sort, just where it is not needed.

In his refreshing article on pigeon decoying (July 26 issue) A. J. Coats mentioned that so far he had not found a decoy pigeon (other than a dead bird) showing a really flat, matt paint finish. On the day after this article appeared I spent the afternoon decoying pigeon on a field of nearly ripe wheat where I made the following observations.

At first I set up seven decoy birds (all I took with me) on sticks so that their backs were about level with the top of the corn some thirty yards out into the wheat. Four of these decoys were rubber and a drab lightish grey; one was roughly hewn from wood and a similar shade, while the other two were smooth, accurately painted works of art—pigeon to the last proportion—presented to me by an inventive craftsman and previously referred to.

From my hide in a nearby spinney I watched and shot pigeon that hovered over or pitched straight in to these dummies, and as the flies were so troublesome I did not augment the set with any dead birds. Then as a position on the far side of the field looked more promising I went to reconnoitre and on my way stopped to look back at my decoys. With the afternoon sun full on them the two most lifelike decoys shone like newly painted battleships, while the others showed no reflection at all. He went to too much trouble, I thought, and sandpapered them too smooth. The paint is drab enough, but with that surface there is bound to be a shine. But in view of the fact that the pigeon had not been put off I decided to experiment and taking up the "shiners" I set them out in front of my new hide on the far side of the field, leaving the other five decoys in their original position.

Strangely enough, from then on, hardly a bird looked at the five drab decoys. Nearly all came straight for the high class models still glinting in the sunlight. Even the few birds that did inspect the duller quintet only hovered and then, spotting the shimmering pair flew over to join them without hesitation.

I must take another, closer look at live pigeon feeding in bright sunshine. It could be that a certain amount of brilliance is not a deterrent in a decoy that looks almost more like a pigeon than a pigeon itself.

Those who deprecate the current rock-and-roll craze and despair of modern youth, may take heart from the following conversation between two boys, of 13 and 10 summers respectively, overheard as they rode their bicycles into the next-door garage.

One rang his cycle bell loudly. "Dig that crazy din," said the 13-year-old, "that's a rock-'n'-roll term, you know."

If he expected an enthusiastic reception he was disappointed. Came no reply; so he repeated the phrase and its explanation.

The 10-year-old spoke. "So you have never seen a lobworm? Well come and look here. They are splendid for fishing."

There is no affinity between Presley and perch.

Grouse Over Dogs

by Michael Brander

IT is a popular misconception south of the Border that anyone living in Scotland must naturally shoot grouse at frequent intervals. Of course there are those Sassenachs who seem to think, perhaps not entirely without reason, that all Scotsmen sit on misty hilltops clad in plaids and munching porridge to the distant strains of the bagpipes. It is a similar misconception fostered by the less gunshy popular Press that the twelfth of August is still a "glorrrious" day. Now I suppose this is all harmless enough and far be it from me to decry it, but it is certainly true that the greater glory of the Twelfth is inherent in fact that the shooting season proper is now almost upon us once more. For it must nowadays be a small minority indeed who regularly go out to kill their grouse on "G" day itself, and it is even doubtful, in these days of stately tourist attractions, whether the majority of them are British, let alone Scots.

Something Special

So much for legend. For all that there is something special about the first day of the season for any individual, whether that day falls in the middle of November, in mid-September, or on the twelfth of August. When it is the Twelfth and you are aware that there is likely to be a good showing of birds strong on the wing then there is admittedly an extra special thrill to it. No one who has ever shot grouse will differ from that, for they can provide a startling variety of shots and give tremendendous sport apart from the fact that the background of the moor itself usually helps to make the day a memorable one.

Somehow it always seems to be overlooked that some of the best moors in the country are in England. Almost always grouse seem to be associated in people's minds with Scotland. Perhaps it is partly the fact that once a good day has been spent on a Highland moor with the birds hurtling towards the butts from widely varying angles and heights the scene is not easily forgotten. The background of mountains, blue and violet, and all the romantic trimmings which make Scotland a tourist paradise, plus first-rate sport, do make up an overpowering memory.

More probably the reason the public generally associates grouse with Scotland is the fact that for years it has been dinned into the ears of reporters in Fleet Street that the Twelfth is good copy in a slack period and old traditions die hard. Grouse and Scotland have become synonymous with a regular annual column. But of recent years there has been a tendency to fight shy of the ballyhoo associated with the occasion. Apart from anything else the grouse have not been there in any considerable quantity.

Reports this year, however, seem to indicate that, on the whole, through the country, it has been a good breeding season. There were some fears that owing to the prolonged drought there might have been casualties amongst the young grouse on the moors where the water holes had dried up, but from what I have seen, purely locally, this has not been as bad as was feared. Nor have the recent heavy rains, which may have done a good deal of damage amongst the late hatched pheasants and partridges, affected the grouse, which were, of course, further forward and better able to stand the prolonged wet.

Having spent the afternoon prior to writing this article going over part of a nearby moor with my dogs I can testify that the prospects appear unexpectedly good and very encouraging, if they are as representative of other moors, as they probably are. On this particular moor, on another part of which the Scottish Field Trials Association will shortly be holding their pointer and setter trials, there was every indication of a good show of birds. With Mr. J. Brown, the well-known judge of pointer and setter trials, headkeeper to the Marquis of Tweedale, we found eight good well-grown coveys within barely half-a-mile and, had we been dogging, we could have had a very satisfactory bag between us for a brief hour or so.

It is an interesting indication of the trend of present-day shooting that, although there are still very many people who have never shot over dogs, the numbers of entries at pointer and setter trials have been increasing over recent years. There are signs that more and more people are beginning to appreciate the sport that can be had in this manner and to realise that grouse are not the only birds which can be shot satisfactorily over dogs. Certainly there is a special fascination in shooting over any pointing dog.

Meaningless Comparisons

That does not mean to say that I am decrying shooting driven game. Far from it. To see the little black dots coming towards you suddenly develop wings and then with a brief, surprisingly loud *whirr* to hear them go past is always a thrill. The angles, the speed, the height, and the numbers may vary with each bird; first one old bird low on the heather, then suddenly a whole covey high to the left, so it goes on and the birds are seldom easy, if the driving is being done well.

The secret is to take your bird as soon as you can in front, if possible at the moment when it still remains a black dot with wings scarcely visible. By shooting then the bird will, with luck, arrive a crumpled ball of feathers somewhere beside the butt. To wait is to be hopelessly left behind. Undoubtedly there is something special about that form of shooting too.

But there is equally something special about the driven covey of partridges erupting over a Norfolk hedge, or the really high pheasant sailing deceptively over the treetops on a hillside above a valley. Each is a very special shot, which it is not given to everyone to have much practice at nowadays. It is perfectly true to say, if it is any consolation, that pigeon coming into decoys present the shooter with as many varied problems. That is by the way. There is something about the day, the surroundings and the quarry, which always makes such comparisons meaningless, even if the shot may be almost identical. It is at moments such as these that I decide wildfowling is the greatest sport of all and end up by going out and missing with both barrels a rabbit lolloping towards its burrow.

All the same, in common with many others, my greatest pleasure in shooting is in watching good dog work. Unless there is a place in my shooting for my dog I feel that something is missing from the day. It is primarily for that reason that I enjoy a day on my own rough shoot with my dogs as much as anything. To be perfectly honest about it there is also the economic factor that it undoubtedly provides more sport at less cost. It is precisely for this reason that dogging is generally becoming popular once more.

Limitations of Driving

Beaters are expensive enough on any shoot, goodness knows. On a moor the average minimum payment per beater is probably twenty-five shillings per man and twelve and six per boy, apart from the difficulty of finding those prepared to foresake the joys of "the telly" and the fireside. When transport charges and costs of feeding are added on to that and, on some remote moors, the cost of feeding and bedding overnight, or by the week, it becomes a very expensive business indeed, if it is to be done properly. Add to this the point that the number of big days any moor will stand is strictly limited and that there are usually some parts that can never be satisfactorily driven, and it will be appreciated that driving has its own limitations.

On the other hand, with systematic and careful dogging the same moor can probably be made to produce extremely good sport throughout the season, with a series of days producing twenty or thirty brace. The cost of such sport is considerably lower and, to my mind, the enjoyment, spun out over a longer period, is considerably greater. Of course, the two things are entirely different sports and comparisons are always invidious and misleading.

The critics of dogging will claim that it has its drawbacks. They will argue that it requires considerable exercise and exertion, but presuming the participants are fit they will be none the

(Continued on page 634, col. 3)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters and photographs are invited for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published. Correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, The Shooting Times & Country Magazine, 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1. 'Phone: HYDe Park 2556/2557.

THE WILDFOWLER'S DOG

Sir,—I am one of the readers who do not approve of the dog that ran in to the fall. This debate began some fourteen years ago, when Mr. Moxon advised the training of a dog to do so.

We all have the right to our opinions, of course, and anyone is free to do as he likes, so far as I am concerned. I have always trained my own and other peoples' dogs to be steady to the fall. The runner-in can never be so useful as the good, steady dog; in fact, he can be a nuisance, and the cause of lost birds.

Only last season I saw the steady dog gather birds that the runner-in would have failed on. Standing to heel, watching the shooting, was an orthodox-trained labrador; three duck were shot down, and he marked all three. Two fell on land across the river, and one in the river. Sent for the one that was in the water, the dog gathered it and came to hand with his carry. Later, he was commanded to cross the river for the other two which he soon found.

Now, surely, here is a clear case showing how the runner-in would have made a poor show, and in all probability lost birds would have resulted. If shooting meant just one shot, and just one bird, perhaps the retrieving without orders would not matter so much. But then shooting is not like that. I have been out on the marsh when six, ten, and seventeen duck were down at once. The argument that time is saved by the run-in before orders is a myth.

All good and well-trained dogs are eagerly waiting for the order to retrieve, and off they go as fast as their legs will take them; all that is needed is just the word "Fetch!" or the raised finger and all is well.

T. L. JONES,
Morriston, Swansea.

[In the instance you give, all three duck were dead. The whole argument receiving ventilation at the present time, centres round the dog which runs into the fall of only seriously hit birds which are on their way down to earth. If an experienced dog, capable of knowing that a bird is seriously hit, starts to run in immediately, he will be halfway to the fall perhaps before his master, who may be watching and shooting at a second bird is in a position to say "Fetch!" That is the point of the argument. Also the dog which runs in to the fall can easily be checked, if necessary, by a sharp command.—Ed.]

THE HEARING OF PIGEON

Sir,—In a recent article, I said that I believe the eyes of pigeon to be better than their ears. I was therefore interested, on reading Richard Jefferies' "The Gamekeeper at Home" the other day for the first time, to find the following:

"There is a belief that pigeon are partially deaf. If stalked in the daytime they take little heed of footsteps or slight noises which would alarm other creatures."

It would be interesting to have other readers' views on this subject, in particular those of Mr. A. J. Coats who evidently shoots about twenty times more pigeon than, for example, myself who has been presumptuous enough to write about them occasionally.

Mr. Coats' figures are certainly staggering. I suppose that he operates in some area of Hampshire or Berkshire, where there are huge numbers of pigeon. I am sure we all hope that he will write more. For instance, since he averages nearly 330 per week, it would be interesting to know whether he ever has a blank day or a day when he shoots badly, what is the best bag he has ever had in a day, how he disposes of the birds or at roughly what price, how many pigeon he reckons to kill with a hundred cartridges, whether his annual totals fluctuate much, in how large an area the pigeon are shot, etc., etc.

W.C.,
Somerset.

WILDFOWL TAXIDERMY

Sir,—In the issue for July 19, your correspondent quotes the late Montague Brown in his "Practical Taxidermy" that all preparations of arsenic are useless for preserving the skins of birds and animals, an extraordinary statement and in absolute contradiction to contemporary evidence and proof.

I fear that I have little respect for some of Mr. Brown's dicta. For instance, he advocates the storing of furs and skins in a bright light, by which (if sunlight is meant) your skins and furs would soon fade and lose their colour.

For the despatch of small birds, wounded or otherwise, without risk of damaging their skin, Mr. Brown was in favour of compressing the breasts, a method which I for one consider to be abominally cruel.

His preservative powder (alum and nitre) is good clean and harmless to use, but lacks the deterrent values, for insects, of some of the stronger preservatives.

J. C. M. NICHOLS,
Hindhead, Surrey.

FOWLING EQUIPMENT AND CLOTHES

Sir,—Seeing that "Veteran, Lincs." has been so extremely scathing about the use of a plastic mackintosh and of gloves recommended in what seemed to me a sensible enough article, he should now tell us who he thinks will shoot better—the man with a wet body and semi-frozen hands or the man who has enough sense to keep his body dry and his hands as warm as possible.

Incidentally, those shooting men who are not obsessed with the ludicrous idea that there is something noble in being more uncomfortable than one need be, may be interested to know, if they don't already, that one can buy for 10s. 6d. an excellent little hand-warmer which is no larger than a small cigarette case, burns lighter fuel and keeps hot for several hours. It is, I believe, obtainable from most gunmakers.

J. E. T. RAWLINS,
Somerset.

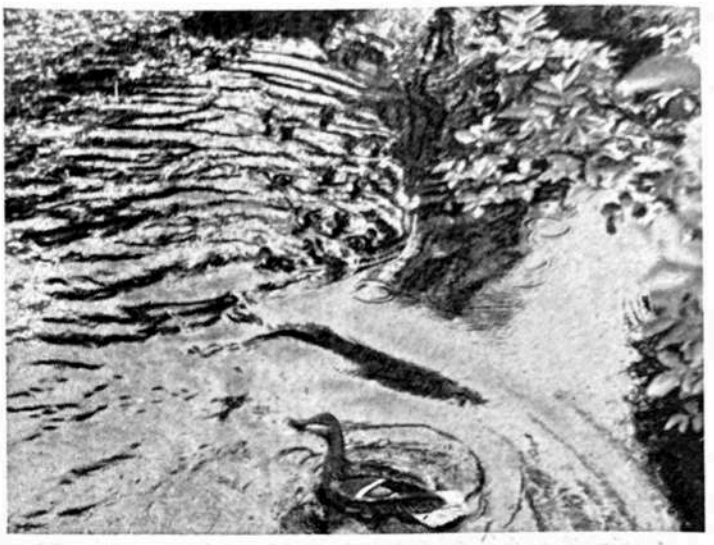
EGG COLLECTING: PEREGRINES

Sir,—A. P. Shorter and R. D. Humber are both batting on rather sticky wickets with their letters on egg-collecting and peregrine falcons. As our captain has already put himself on at both ends with his editorial lobs, I will confine myself as a humble fielder in the ornithological slips to answering Mr. Humber's question "Wherever is the peregrine abundant?"

Here are three localities where a pair nest at a rough estimate about every two miles of coast: (a) The North Cornish coast; (b) the South and West of Ireland; (c) the Kentish coast between Dover and Folkestone, where however, during the war all eyries were destroyed to protect the carrier pigeons bearing vital messages.

Few people realise how abundant peregrines are. As I have myself been a bit of a birds'-nester in my time, I must look out for catches, but do not want to be put in next wicket.

SEA-PIE,
Norfolk.



Scattering for cover. (See letter, "The Snapshot.")

THE SNAPSHOT

Sir,—I am always interested in the photographs which appear in your journal, especially those obviously taken by amateurs like myself. I have only recently taken up photography, and I enclose *the* snapshot of my year—a mallard duck quacking loudly while her fine brood scatter for cover.

I came across this family up a millstream off Chichester Harbour, and, after stalking them, rose up suddenly from behind the reeds and took a quick snapshot, hardly expecting it to come out.

R.N.,
Dorking, Surrey.

HANDGUN BALLISTICS

Sir,—In answer to Mr. D. Hanson of Sheffield, it is rather splitting hairs to particularise to within less than one hundred feet per second in the muzzle velocity of pistols or rifles. This will vary with the date of production (at the end of the last war I tested some Martini Henry .450 Government surplus ammunition which dated back to 1895—*i.e.* before the Boar War! No misfires, but appallingly inaccurate); the nationality of the cartridges (British, German, American, etc.); the individual factory or private loader; and the climate in which the tests are conducted (ballistics tend to be appreciably higher in the tropics for example).

The famous .30 or 7.63 Mauser automatic pistol dates back to at least 1899 and was, I believe, one of the first successful semi-automatic pistols (later models could be made fully automatic). For over three decades it had far and away the highest velocity of any pistol or handgun. In a booklet on pistols and revolvers written in 1930, a British Army instructor described the revolver as an "obsolete weapon."

In his book "Pistols and Revolvers" published in 1935, Major Hatcher of the U.S. Army gives the M.V. of the .30 Mauser as 1,320 feet per second. True, the American loading companies now give it as 1,420 feet per second, but the original cartridge was (and is) German and not American.

In 1935 (or thereabouts) the revolver took on a new lease of life with the introduction of the equally epoch making .357 Magnum and I had the opportunity to try it out in Mexico shortly after its appearance through the kindness of Capt. Coates, a British ex-Army officer who maintained a fine collection of all the more powerful American handguns and small-bore rifles. To our surprise, the "kick" was by no means intolerable though the muzzle blast made my ears "sing" for some time after in the highly rarified air of the Mexican Plateau at an elevation of 7,500 feet. A weaker brother, who had come to target a .32 calibre, said "That has a *wicked* report for a pistol" ("a remark I have never forgotten!).

I see that the Great Western Company has now brought out a special .357 long ("Atomic") cartridge for which they claim an m.v. of no less than 1,600 feet per second (perhaps the highest recorded for any handgun). So I see little wrong with my original figures.

The point is, of course, that these modern revolvers have appreciably better velocity than any existing automatic and incomparably better striking energy and stopping power. The ballistics of the new .44 magnum seem incredible for any weapon intended to be operated with one hand. I see that the recoil is described as "severe." I should think so!

E. MUSPRATT,
Tunbridge Wells.

New Books

Adaptive Coloration in Animals, by Hugh B. Cott (Methuen, 75s.). This re-issue of a book which has long been unobtainable will be welcome. It deals comprehensively with the nature and meaning of coloration in the animal world, has an Introduction by Julian S. Huxley, and is illustrated with a coloured frontispiece, 48 half-tone plates, and numerous text illustrations.

The first part of this well-produced volume of over 500 pages deals with concealment, either to escape enemies, or to catch prey. The second concerns advertisement, whether for warning or alluring. The third considers disguise—animals which imitate other animals or their own environment.

Dr. Huxley describes it as: "Perhaps the most satisfactory book yet written on adeptation. It brings together great masses of data, from the field, the museum, and the laboratory, analyses them in the light of physical and psychological principles, and deals satisfactorily with the methodological problem of establishing proof of their adeptive nature. It is a worthy successor to Sir Edward Poulton's 'The Colours of Animals.' The one was a pioneer study, the other is in many respects the last word on the subject."

The author, who is an expert photographer, has been all over the world for his subjects. He illustrates his pages with many remarkable photographs and drawings. The book was first published in March, 1940, and is now reprinted with minor corrections.

Cape of Storms, by Hugh Popham (Hart-Davis, 21s.). The distant-water trawlers have their fishing grounds off the remote Murmanski coast, well within the Arctic circle, beyond North Cape, and 1,500 miles from their home port. Trawling, needless to say, can be a rough, tough, and often a monotonous job—and even a dangerous one in latitudes renowned for their foul weather.

The author, on a trip with the trawlers, draws for us a vivid picture of the life of these deep-sea fishermen and the hardships and small joys which come their way. He draws it well against a lively background. Russia is seen, but never visited, and the only human contact comes by way of the ship's radio.

Constantly, as one reads this story, unavoidably comes to mind the words of the old hymn, "For those in peril on the sea," although such a voyage as the author took was merely a routine one to the fishermen.

Racing Pigeons, by Colin Osman (Faber and Faber, 15s.). This book is a complete, up-to-date, authoritative "must" for every pigeon fancier, whether he is a beginner, or has been racing for years. The author is not only a practical pigeon-fancier himself, but belongs to the third generation of a family who have been acknowledged leaders of the sport in this country.

Between the 190-odd pages, fully illustrated, the whole story of racing pigeon is concisely and expertly discussed, and the author deals very fully with all the more complicated aspects of his subject.

To The Polar Sunrise, by K. Westcott Jones (Museum Press, 13s. 6d.). Although within the Arctic Circle, the north of Norway is inhabited by half a million Norwegians and about fifty thousand Laplanders, those "gypsies of the north." Although a large part of their year is spent in total darkness, they live normal lives.

The author was determined to see exactly how these people spent their time during the long winter months, and particularly to learn their reactions on the return of the sun. Thus in January he travelled north by sea along the Norwegian coast and round the North Cape. The sun came back on the appointed day, and he was able to see it lift above the horizon for a bare few minutes—a sight which has escaped human observation for twenty years.

While in Arctic Norway, Mr. Jones visited the Moskenes Maelstrom described by Edgar Allan Poe, and penetrated to another maelstrom, the Saltstraum, in the depths of winter. The book is fully illustrated with photographs.

My Way With Salmon, by Ian Wood (G. Allen and Unwin, 12s. 6d.). Mr. Wood's way with salmon is obviously a good one, for he has caught more than a thousand fish. Editor of *Trout and Salmon* he knows what readers want and as an established writer on angling subjects he is well equipped to give it to them. This book (his third on salmon fishing) deals with equipment, fly fishing, spinning, playing and landing fish and boatwork is another good one in the *Angling Times* series, and the nine photographs are first-class.

Davies's Salmon and Sea Trout Fishing, by W. E. Davies (Elliot Right Way Books, 7s. 6d.). We recommended, recently, "Bill" Davies's "Trout and Grayling Fishing," and we have no hesitation in doing the same for this, his latest book. He shows the reader that fishing for salmon and sea trout need not be an expensive luxury, tells him how to catch both species, adding many a well-proved wrinkle of his own, and illustrates this essentially practical and easy-to-read volume as attractively as he writes.

Coarse Fishing Today, by Cyril Smith (Richard Bell, 9s. 6d.). Those who remember "Gordonian's" stimulating articles in our late lamented *Angler* and *Angler's News* will need no introduction to the author, who, not before time has brought a fresh and necessary approach to an old subject. Mr. Smith has devoted himself mainly to the problems of fishing moving waters and as a logician and philosopher, besides being an enthusiastic and practical angler, he stimulates clear and original thinking about a subject to which thought is sometimes seldom given.

Sea Anglers' Fishes of New Zealand, by Arthur W. Parott (Hodder and Stoughton, 18s.). A reliable, well-illustrated reference book written in plain language essentially for the sea fisherman. If you are thinking of emigrating to N.Z. or take a more than average interest in sea fishing, add this to your library.

Sea Fishing With the Experts, edited by Jack Thorndike (Allen and Unwin 12s. 6d.). Mr. Thorndike is the Editor of *Angling Times* and in this book he has called upon five regular contributors to his journal to write about their favourite sea fish and how best to catch them. The experts are Richard Arnold, "Tiny" Bennett, Derek Fletcher, Hugh Stoker and Eric Horsfall Turner, and between them they have contributed to produce a practical, up-to-date book on fishing for all the sporting sea fish. Illustrated with photographs and detailed line drawings by R. E. Legge.

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BALNAGOWN

GROUSE SHOOTING SEASON, 1957

Grouse shooting at BALNAGOWN will commence on Saturday, August 31st. Owing to bereavement there are a few guns available. For inclusive charges staying at BRAELANGWELL LODGE (described as "the finest hotel in the Highlands") with keepers, beaters, ponies, also "driven" wild duck and partridge shooting, salmon fishing, etc., please apply to Estate Office, Balnagown Castle, Kildary, Ross-shire.

FISHING. In spite of low water for most of the season, our catches to July 26th for an average of 12 rods are 741 salmon, 134 sea trout and 765 brown trout. There are a few rods available until the end of the season, September 30th.

CHRISTMAS SHOOTING PARTY. We are now arranging for a shooting party of 10 guns in all, to stay at BRAELANGWELL LODGE for a fortnight's shooting at Christmas. The following bag should be achieved: 250 brace of pheasants, 250 brace of wild duck, 150 brace of partridges, 25 brace of woodcock, 25 hinds, also some roe deer, capercailzie, blackgame, ptarmigan, snipe, hares, etc. For full particulars please apply to:

BALNAGOWN, KILDARY, ROSS-SHIRE, SCOTLAND

Telephone: Kildary 243.

STARTING A SQUIRREL CLUB

by L. R. James

MANY thousands of gun owners have no shoot of their own and find it difficult or impossible to obtain permission for an occasional day's sport. One solution is to form a Squirrel Club. Strangely enough, it is much easier for an organised club or syndicate to get shooting than it is for an individual. As many shooters know to their cost, it is virtually impossible for a lone stranger to get permission to shoot even a few pigeon where he is not known. These notes are written to sugget that would-be inland rough shooters organise themselves for their own good in much the same way as the wildfowlers have done on the coast.

Just over 10 years ago, as a newcomer to a village where I had no previous contacts, I started a highly successful Grey Squirrel Club by inserting an advertisement in a country paper. I asked lone shooters to write to me, and within a week I arranged a meeting and persuaded the county pests officer to attend. Twelve guns turned up, and over a few drinks we were able to elect officers and form a club. To everyone's surprise a shoot was arranged for the following Sunday, and from then we never looked back. The local Press were good enough to print a good report of our first shoot, and very soon we had a nucleus of estates to shoot over. Finally, we had over a dozen woodlands where we were welcome every season. Nothing succeeds like success!

The most important and over-worked officer in a shooting club is the secretary. All members can help with suggestions and contacts with landowners and farmers, but it is the tact, energy, and personality of the secretary that finally gets the permission for the Club to shoot. Ideally, he should also possess a typewriter, telephone, and a car and be prepared to devote much of his leisure to club affairs. He also has to "take the can back" when things go wrong—as sometimes happens in the best regulated club!

Welcomed by the Ministry

It is a great advantage if the club orders a stock of well-printed letter paper headed with the aims and objects of the club, and better still if one or two local notabilities can be persuaded to become vice-presidents and put their names on the note paper. The club should also elect a hard-boiled treasurer and a press officer. This latter official can earn valuable publicity for the club by sending regular reports of shoots, and letters to local and sporting papers.

A new squirrel club will be welcomed by the Ministry of Agriculture, and the local officer will give valuable assistance and support in the initial stages. He will provide a specimen set of rules that can be adapted to the special requirements of the club, and perhaps the loan of a squirrel pole. Sometimes he can be persuaded to issue in advance a hundred or so cartridges against tails to be submitted later. Being a civil servant, it is almost certain that he will *not* commit himself by recommending an untried club to landowners, but after a season he may invite the Club to assist in any large scale vermin shoots he may have on hand.

In return for assistance, the pests officer will require a monthly return of the number of squirrels destroyed. The local gunsmith can also help a new club. He may know customers who are bothered with squirrels or pigeons, or he may be able to introduce new members. The local rifle club should also be approached in case any of their members feel like using their skill on something more exciting than paper targets. Good riflemen are an asset to a squirrel club, anyway.

Rules of Conduct

It is most necessary that a few simple rules of conduct are laid down and strictly adhered to. Some of the members may be newcomers to firearms, and in the excitement of the chase may do foolish things through ignorance. In time they will learn, but in the meantime other members and the public must be protected (in the financial sense) by a Group Accident Policy. This will cost the club about £2 and will provide generous indemnity in the unhappy event of an accident.

All members must, of course, hold a valid Gun Licence, and if riflemen, a Firearms Certicate. It is also best to have a Standing Order prohibiting dogs on organised shoots. A *good* dog, is, I admit, worth its weight in squirrels for marking and retrieving, but the average dog is both useless and a nuisance if game is present. The dog rule can always be suspended if a genuine squirrel hound turns up.

The most important rule is the one broken most often—"The target for today is grey squirrels only." The success and future reputation of the club depend entirely on its record for respecting game rights. Any members who shoots at (never mind whether he kills it or not) a pheasant or even a rabbit should be expelled forthwith. When the club is well known, it is pretty certain that invitations will include permission to shoot other vermin, rabbits, and pigeon etc., but in the early days it is better to keep strictly to squirrels, at least on organised shoots.

The Squirrel-Pole

A lively bone of contention is the squirrel-pole. This implement weighs nearly 20lb., and is very hard work for two men to manipulate in high timber. If a pole is used (and it more than doubles the bag) then all members should take their turn by rota and leave their guns at home that day. Where the timber is not too tall, it is easier to carry a bill-hook and cut a suitable sapling on the spot.

The club itself must decide whether rifles are to be permitted. In my opinion, the rifleman gets the better sport, and he can save the club much expensive shot-gun ammunition, but many landowners and all policemen object to rifles being used near built-up areas.

Squirrel shooting can be the cheapest of all field sports (it can even be run at a profit), but I believe that a fairly steep subscription makes the members respect their club and also deters those who are not dead keen. A good day's shooting a week is worth paying for, nowadays. The annual subscription should be high enough to cover secretarial expenses and insurance, and a bit more. In my club the treasurer collects a "cap" every meet (for which members get an allocation of club cartridges) and there may also be a "whip round" for petrol for transport. We also have a sweep on the highest score or the day's bag, and fines on members for misdemeanors, sales of squirrels and tails, and occasional donations from grateful landowners all help to build up useful funds for cartridges and our annual dinner.

Where club funds are short, members can supply their own cartridges and be repaid according to the number of tails they hand over.

In search of squirrels with .22s and shotguns.

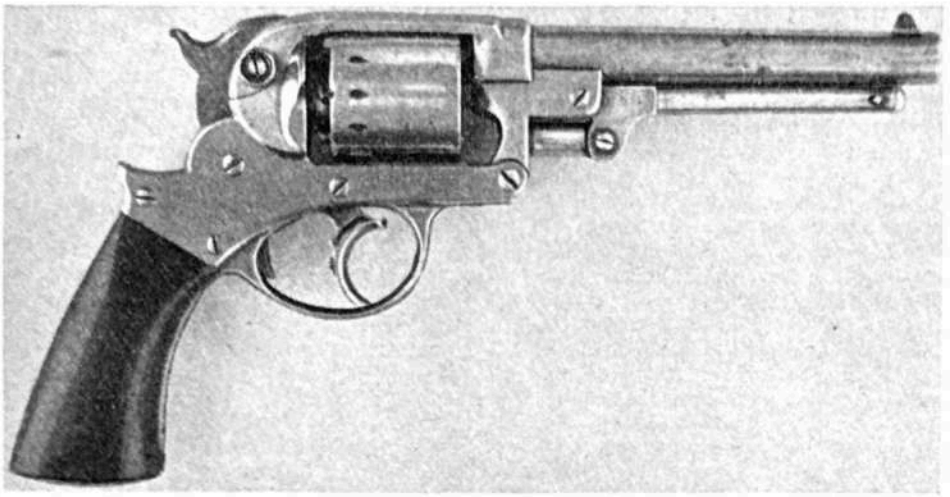
Forthcoming Field Trials

SECRETARIES OF FIELD TRIAL SOCIETIES ARE INVITED TO SEND US REPORTS OF THEIR TRIALS FOR PUBLICATION IN "THE SHOOTING TIMES." REPORTS SHOULD BE SENT DIRECT TO THE KENNEL EDITOR, MR. P. R. A. MOXON, HERNE COMMON, HERNE BAY, KENT.

Aug. 14: Labrador Club of Scotland (Amateur Handlers' Stake). Cromlix, Dunblane, Perthshire. Judges: The Lady Auckland, Mr. A. Forbes and Mr. A. McLaughlan. Secretary: J. M. Manson, Glengour House, Ferryhills, Inverkeithing, Fife.

Aug. 19 & 20: Gamekeepers National Association (Retrievers). Lennoxlove Estate, Hadington. Secretary: A. Stewart, Hills Tower, Lochfoot, Dumfries.

Sept. 24 & 25: I.G.L. Pointer and Setter Society (Puppy and Non-Winners and All-Age Stakes). Sutton Manor, Sutton Scotney, Winchester, Hants. Judges: Lady Auckland and Mr. T. Gaunt. Secretary: E. Holland Buckley, The Kennel Club, 1-4 Clarges Street, Piccadilly, London, W.1.



This Civil War Veteran shows the space on either side of the chambers, one of the chief difficulties in high velocity revolvers.

HIGH VELOCITY HANDGUNS

by Richard Arnold

IN a recent article on *target* shooting with pistols I mentioned the merits and demerits of both revolvers and self-loading pistols. Mr. Eric Muspratt, in a letter to the editor, took up the question of high velocity revolver *versus* high velocity pistol but, unfortunately, in the examples he quoted he was in error with his ballistic figures.

The .357 magnum, an American design, and produced by Colt, Ruger, as well as Smith & Wesson, is a first-class weapon and it has acquired quite a reputation, and not a little glamour. This is a revolver, designed specially for F.B.I. and U.S. Border Patrol Service, and shoots a cartridge powerful enough to drive through an automobile engine block. But though man-stopping is the primary duty of police revolvers, owing to the modern methods of the United States criminals using high-powered cars either to perpetrate or get away from the scene of their crimes, the main reason behind the design of the .357 magnum revolver was to produce a *car stopper*.

What are the ballistics of the .357 magnum ? The muzzle velocity is 145 feet per second, it fires a 158 grain bullet, and has a muzzle energy of 690 foot pounds.

Suppose now we compare the German Mauser 7.63 mm. automatic pistol. This was essentially a military weapon, designed for man-stopping, good accuracy both as a pistol and as a short carbine with a shoulder stock, with an extreme range of 1,800 metres. With a magazine capacity of 10 rounds, the ammunition varied, according to type manufactured, from 1,320 to *1,600* feet per second, and with a muzzle striking energy of about 400 foot pounds.

Luger Loads

Let us take another example of a German automatic military pistol. The Luger (Parabellum) 9 mm. Model '08 automatic was designed nominally for cartridges with a muzzle velocity of 1,100 to 1,500 feet per second. The usual muzzle velocity of the German standard cartridge was 1,040 feet per second, but machine pistol ammunition was also used, giving 1,500 feet per second. The bullet weight is 125 grains, and it has a striking energy of about 320 to 460 foot pounds. In addition to the 9 mm. model, the Germans manufactured one in 7.65 mm. calibre. This fired a bottle-necked cartridge with a 93 grain bullet at 1,250 feet per second muzzle velocity and a striking energy of 325 foot pounds.

Now, by way of contrast, the United States Smith and Wesson .45 1917 *revolver*, designed as a *military* weapon and not for car stopping, fired a 230 grain bullet at 810 feet per second muzzle velocity. The U.S. .45 1911 automatic pistol, again a military weapon, has a muzzle velocity of from 810 to 860 feet per second, with a bullet of 230 grains, and striking energy of 340 to 378 foot pounds.

Before reaching final conclusions as to the possibility of revolvers having higher powered cartridges than self-loading pistols, it is perhaps as well to compare specific examples of revolvers and semi-automatic pistols in use as military weapons today.

Russian Arms

Russian arms excite most people's imagination. The Russian Nagant revolver, 7.62 mm. calibre, fires a bullet of 108 grains, having a muzzle velocity of 726 feet per second and striking energy of 125 foot pounds. But the Tokarev 7.62 automatic pistol, which is the official Russian Service pistol, fires an 85 grain bullet at a muzzle velocity of 1,390/1,400 feet per second, and has a striking energy of 365 foot pounds. This is, actually, one of the most remarkable and efficient handguns in production, being, basically, a copy of John Moses Browning's original Colt .45 automatic pistol, though greatly improved upon. Thus the Russian automatic pistol leads their revolver in the high velocity field.

Turn to home. I do not suppose we are giving any official secrets away when we disclose that our Enfield .380 revolver fires a 200 grain bullet at 600 feet per second muzzle velocity, and has a striking energy of 190 foot pounds. The Webley .455 Mark VI pistol No. 1 fires a 255 grain bullet at about 600 feet per second muzzle velocity, having a striking energy of about 220 foot pounds. The British Colt .455 automatic (which was adapted from the U.S.A. 1911 model, with modifications) fires a 220 grain bullet at 750 feet per second muzzle velocity and a striking energy of 270 foot pounds. Thus the British military automatic pistol is again ahead of the revolver.

The French used, and still do, their Modele d'Ordonnance 1892 revolver firing a copper jacketed bullet with a black powder charge. This has a muzzle velocity of 625 feet per second and striking energy of 104 foot pounds. The bullet weighs 102 grains. By contrast their 1935-A, 7.63 mm. long automatic pistol shoots a metal jacketed bullet from a long cased cartridge, giving a muzzle velocity of 1,120 feet per second. Their Star 7.65 mm. pistol shoots a 72 grain bullet at from 900 to 980 feet per second muzzle velocity, and has a striking energy of from 130 to 150 foot pounds. The French military pistol is therefore capable of firing higher velocity loads than their revolver.

The Belgian military handgun is, of course, a pistol. The Browning Long 9 mm. model handles a 110 grain bullet at 1,110 feet per second and has a striking energy of 300 foot pounds. Their 9 mm. Hipower Browning automatic pistol handles ammunition with a muzzle velocity of up to 1,500 feet per second and a striking energy of 365 pounds.

From a brief perusal of the foregoing it will be seen that *throughout the world the military semi-automatic pistol handles higher velocity cartridges than the military revolver.*

I have stated in earlier articles that, owing to the gas escape from the front of the cylinder, the revolver cannot handle high velocity pistol cartridges as effectively as the semi-automatic. In actual fact, high velocity cartridges can be used by the employment of a sealing device, but this introduces several complications and also increases considerably the cost of manufacture. The revolvers manufactured in the United States are, however, built with great precision and the gap between cylinder and barrel is as small a tolerance as practical.

A Colossal Cartridge

Let us turn now to the high velocity American revolver. The .357 magnum has been mentioned: this was followed by the .357 "Atomic," shooting a higher velocity cartridge, but this has been eclipsed by the introduction of the Smith & Wesson .44 magnum. The muzzle velocity of this cartridge is 1,570 feet per second, using a 240 grain, gas-check bullet, and has a muzzle striking energy of 1,313 foot pounds. This is a colossal cartridge without doubt. On test, the magnum shot through ten ¾in. pine boards and drove into the eleventh. The .357 magnum, against which it was tested, was one board less.

The cylinder of the gun is double heat-treated in order to stand up to the enormous pressures generated, while the weapon itself weighs no less than 2lb. 15oz. The barrel rib is grooved to aid heat dissipation.

It is important to recall that both the .357 magnum and the .44 magnum were not designed as military or target arms. They were designed exclusively for police work in the United States, and it should be noted that American preference is always for a revolver for these duties.

The requirements of a police weapon are that it should be safe to carry and quick to bring into action. A revolver is safer to carry than an automatic because the latter has either to have the chamber empty or the safety catch on. If the chamber is empty, the shooter after drawing the weapon has to load it by drawing back the slide and then fire. If carried with the safety catch on, that has to be released. A revolver can be fired as soon as drawn by pulling the trigger. It is essential that the law officer should get into action quickly because one shot only may be fired, and that first and solitary shot should come from his weapon: he may have no second chance.

But there is another reason behind the American preference for a *police* revolver, though they prefer semi-automatics as military

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BACK and FORE

by Stats

IT is now twenty-five years since the British shooting world was presented with the key to better scores. At that time, two writers on shooting matters simultaneously published articles condemning the "brute strength" system and advocating the "no effort" method.

Arthur Traies wrote on "The use of the sling" and referred to the loop sling in particular. This was twelve months after the American team had been to Bisley and demonstrated it so successfully. In a very short time, A. G. Parker and Co. Ltd. had made up some of these slings in webbing, the loop portion lined with felt, and the enthusiasts were free to experiment.

The writer gave as the three main essentials, (a) the left elbow must go as far under the rifle as comfort will allow; (b) the sling must be fastened in some way just in front of the hand position and (c) the hand must be thrust forward into the angle between sling and fore-end. Obviously the important factor was not the sling but the technique of its use. To these can be added two factors that assist in placing the elbow under the rifle. The first is that the supporting hand should be in such a position that the fore-end is directly over the wrist; the second is that the butt must be in the fleshy hollow of the shoulder.

The disadvantage of thrusting the hand into the angle between sling and fore-end was that the hand was pinched and one developed pins and needles. To overcome this there was a felt handstop that fastened with a strap over the top of the barrel. Some shooters with an eye to its effect on barrel vibration did not like this very much and devised a very simple form of handstop. A hole—or perhaps several—was drilled through the side of the fore-end big enough to take a leather boot-lace which was tied over the sling. Then came the tapped plate and close-up swivel, which rendered the large "meat hook" pretty well obsolete. At this stage, either no hand-stop or one of felt was in use. The stem of the swivel provided enough gap to avoid pinching the hand but was uncomfortable even with the glove—now correct wear for the serious marksman. The experimenters therefore sought something more positive and yet comfortable. For a time cotton reels enjoyed a vogue, progressing to fibre or metal. The shooting glove has also passed through various stages from the one that wasn't left in a bus to the professionally-made padded mit.

Since Arthur Traies was more concerned with the sling he did not go into a detailed account of the relaxed technique as appears in "Experiments in Prone Shooting" by A. G. Banks.

Banks relates how, by accident, he found himself in a position where the rifle did not need to be held up: the sling was doing the work. As an experiment, he opened his left hand altogether and fired at a target.

"To my complete astonishment it was a good 99—the first I had done for twenty years."

Fortunately, he connected this incident with the subject of a book called "Smallbore Rifle Shooting" by Capt. Crossman in which it was said that "Rifle shooting is a matter of entire relaxation." It was fortunate because it brought into print an explanation of the technique used by the most successful shots of the time, although one is tempted to believe that they were not fully aware of what made things tick.

H.S.L.—doubtless the great Longhurst himself—made some observations on the two articles and it is disappointing to see that he deals with the matter of position in a couple of sentences and can do no better than refer to a "comfortable position" and "natural aim."

Here then is the background to what must have been the beginning of the great improvement in the level of scoring. This was the year after the United States had raised the record for the Dewar Match to 7,882 and was the year in which Great Britain had averaged 391.9 and when it had been said that we should not win until we could average 395 a man. By 1953 the record had been lifted to 7,984 and Britain's best to 7,977.

And so did relaxation become identified as an essential part of the art of target shooting. There is no need to expand on the details here for those students who are curious can find the subject discussed in "A.G.'s Book of the Rifle" in which the writings of A. G. Banks have been collected.

☆

The A.G.M.

by David Stone

OUR local Association held their own Annual General Meeting just a week or two ago,—during the heat-wave as a matter of fact. In spite of the heat and the temptation of the nearby beaches, the attendance was fairly good, and with a most acceptable means of keeping cool being served at regular intervals, the evening proved a fairly comfortable and interesting one.

I said that the attendance was fairly good, and so it was, but only in comparison with that of previous years. Of course, most of the regulars were there, but too few new faces! I wonder how it is elsewhere? In our local association, this necessary and vital event in our shooting calendar appears to go almost unnoticed. What a pity this is.

How many times throughout the season do you hear, "I can't understand why they don't do 'this or that'"? or, "I think it's high time that this 'something or other' altered!"? Yes, complaints, ideas, suggestions, constantly being voiced, but seldom reaching the one place where they can be given full and fair consideration: the A.G.M. Is it because shooters do not realise that their ideas can be put on the agenda? Or is there some degree of apathy amongst us?

To the young shooters especially I would recommend their own A.G.M. as a "must"! For they will find it not only interesting, but very instructive too. For who knows but that many of them will very soon be serving on committees, perhaps outside their clubs.

The A.G.M. offers the young shooter especially a grand opportunity of learning something of correct committee procedure and, more important perhaps, something of the various difficulties to be encountered in the successful running of an Association for shooters, which will help them to appreciate also, the amount of voluntary work that is willingly contributed to ensure that the shooting season runs as smoothly as is possible.

To those who contemplate going along to their A.G.M. I would advocate that they are not put off by any preconceived ideas that the meeting will be just a dull, monotonous discussion of routine procedure. That picture is far from the truth. You will find healthy and often hectic debate. You will find humour too; humour that will often spring from the most unexpected sources. Would you think, for instance, that a proposition to build a sort of communal indoor range in the town could lead to a debate as lively and humorous as any I have heard?

At our A.G.M. such a proposition was discussed, and we were informed that already the local Council had been approached. They had viewed it so sympathetically that it had been referred to the Committee for Cemeteries and Open Spaces! Well, here was an opportunity for the wits and humourists among us that was not neglected.

Then there is what is perhaps the most important function of the A.G.M.—the election of officials for the coming year. Of course, if you could not care less who runs the show for you, providing everything goes smoothly, then you will not be there to help in the selection. But if you have the interest of your Association at heart you will attend to cast your vote and perhaps to make a proposition.

You should not feel, if you are young, or new to the sport that your views will not be entertained. Far from it; if any idea or suggestion that you have is properly put forward and seconded, you can be assured that it will receive just the same consideration as any other.

Well, there it is, and what am I trying to say? Simply this: Why leave all the work of running your sport to those who have been doing it for years now, when you can play a vital and important part just by attending the A.G.M. Quite unselfishly, most of your officials have been in office for a long, long time, and to stay in office, with your interests in view they have without a doubt given up other personal interests.

You know, there is an immeasurable amount of personal satisfaction in "doing your bit."

High Velocity Handguns

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arms, and it has to do with tradition. European countries have favoured and developed the automatic pistol as a military weapon, that is, a weapon of offence. Americans have developed the revolver as a weapon of defence. The revolver is part and parcel of American history, the pistol is not.

This phychological aspect is very important when reading into the history of weapons. We have typical examples in Great Britain today: the shotgun trade is built on the side-by-side double: that side-by-side double is a tradition in Britain. In consequence the semi-automatic shotgun is (at the moment) out of favour, though I must heartily endorse Mr. Thurlow Craig's remarks. On the Continent, the automatic pistol is traditional in police and military forces, such revolvers as have been produced are almost unworthy of the name. Only in Great Britain have European revolvers reached their peak, in the famous, incomparable Webley & Scott models.

In summarising, therefore, it will be seen that although the revolver can handle a high velocity cartridge, it requires special precision in manufacture, with consequent higher cost, to do so. That calibre for calibre the semi-automatic pistol, in general, handles a higher velocity cartridge. *That the high-velocity revolver has been produced in one country only, for a specific, limited purpose.*

But, the choice of revolver or pistol is very much a personal one. Each weapon has its merits and demerits, and the handgunner, choosing a weapon, is rather like a woman choosing a hat — it's the personality that counts in the choice, and the chosen object must suit the personal fancy of the choser.

CAPPS' CORNER

by Sea-Pie

WHEN I first came to Norfolk shooting and collecting birds, I made my headquarters at Sheringham, which in those days was a comparatively small place, rather different from the popular holiday-resort it has since become. Each morning I sallied forth across the links, armed with my father's old hammer-gun, and made my way along the beach in the direction of Weybourne and Salthouse in search of desirable specimens.

Between the beach and the upland fields there were all sorts of marshy pools where one might put up almost any species of duck or wader on the British list, a kind of no-man's land, a happy hunting ground indeed, which now alas is almost completely buried under thousands of tons of shingle.

This area is ruined as a resort of wildfowl by the training camp at Weybourne, where big guns fire out to sea at targets towed by planes — undreamed of in those far-off days. Beyond Weybourne sluice the marshes open out into extensive levels below the little red-roofed villages of Salthouse, Cley, and Blakeney; and beyond these again are the stretches of mud and sand and creeks of Blakeney harbour.

Late one cold wintry evening, having been shooting in the harbour, I strolled into the bar of the Fishmongers' Arms, that quaint port of call which still stands in the High Street of Cley village. Two sodden, wet, and literally steaming figures were seated on a wooden bench in front of a roaring fire. One was a quaint-looking bearded man, who I afterwards learned was known as "Old Bloke," whose left hand had been blown off thirty years or so previously, when the barrels of his gun got choked with snow. There he sat, with the iron hook which did duty for the missing limb, supporting a fearsome single-barrel 4-bore with which he continued to do much execution among the duck and geese; and on the sandy floor at his feet lay a tangled heap of "parkers," as juvenile scaup and other hard-fowl were termed by the old-time gunners.

Beside him was seated a strongly-contrasted dapper-looking sportsman, one of the most noted amateur fowlers of the day, the late F. A. Capps. On the edge of the bench beyond Mr. Capps reposed a couple of mallard, every feather of which had been stroked down and placed as neatly in position as if in a taxidermist's shop. Mr. Capps was a man of means who had a house in London; but he spent most of his time, and the whole gunning season, ashore and afloat on the east coast or in the Dutch harbours, his favourite resting place being this very cosy little inn at Cley. In his younger days he had been noted as a fine athlete and amateur boxer. But wildfowling was, as it were, in his blood, and his name is still remembered in the neighbourhood as one of the keenest of the "gentleman-gunners," as men like Capps used to be termed.

Punt-Gunning In Holland

From time to time Mr. Capps spent weeks together punt-gunning in Holland, often accompanied by another amateur as keen as himself —the late Mr. Bolding Monement. Some of the latter's M.S.S. diaries are still extant and he relates many adventures, often shared by Capps. One autumn when punting in the Ruggenzee, these two intrepid fowlers bagged in a fortnight 367 fowl, including 204 wigeon and 103 mallard. An entry under October 25 records their best day and is worth quoting. "Capps and I shot across the sands at some wigeon 105 yards off, bagged 33 and 2 duck— a rare good shot considering the distance. Ran across to Collensplaat, going through heavy slob at a fine lot of wigeon. Bunch after bunch kept leaving them, but we leathered away, and when within about 75 yards they were all on the wing. Capps pulled, and my gun lifting on a swell at the same time, I let the fowl rise about six feet and pulled at the brown. Never saw such a sight in my life. We got 45 and a pintail and a few teal."

Although Capps' exploits took place many years ago, his memory is ever likely to be green in Norfolk ornithological and gunning circles, for a singular reason. At the corner of what is known as the east bank between Cley and Salthouse, there was until quite recently a delectable pool, and a grassy bank beside the beach, known as "Capps' Corner." Night after night throughout the season, Mr. Capps was in the habit of concealing himself in a hole in this bank, to intercept the fowl coming in from Blakeney harbour and the open sea to the quiet waters of Salthouse broad. In after years this notable corner came into the hands of the scholar-naturalist, the late E. C. Arnold, and was bequeathed by him to the National Trust.

"The darned Danishmen."

In his book "Nature Reserves," Arnold speaks in glowing terms of Mr. Capps, and tells of how the famous gunner would set his decoys in the pool and, well hidden in the long grass, await the coming of the fowl. Hundreds of bird-watchers assemble every spring and autumn on the east bank to "spot" the rare waders and other migrants. The ever advancing sea has already completely obliterated the eel-haunted pool and filled it with shingle, and Capps' hole in the bank itself will, before many more winters have passed, share the fate of the vanished pool. Mention has been made of Mr. Capps' best shot when punt-gunning.

Here is the story which is still told when old-time fowlers gather round the fire-side in the Fishmongers' Arms, of the most remarkable night's flight-shooting he ever had at Cley. It was a bitterly cold evening in January 1891, when Salthouse broad was "laid" with ice, and only Capps' Pool and a patch in the middle of the broad had been kept open by immense paddlings of coot. There was no need to put "dummies" down that night; the fowl kept circling round trying to alight in the water. Capps, of course, was down in his usual corner with a good bagful of cartridges, but he shot the whole lot away in about an hour, for as he put it: "I never stopped shooting."

He had amassed more duck than he could carry, and the sheet of ice around him was dotted with bodies which it was too risky to venture to collect by moonlight. Capps accordingly put two couple of mallard in his side-bag; and gathering an armful of wigeon and hard-fowl, deposited them at the bottom of his cache, covering them up with a pile of marram-grass and a heap of snow. Then, slinging, his gun and bag over his shoulder, he took his departure up the bank and along the road to the village.

A Shocking Discovery

Next morning, he was back again before it was fairly light, accompanied by a magnificent retriever, his favourite, Minette. He would never take a dog with him night-flighting, since an occasion some years previously when Minette had gone through the ice in an awkward place, and Capps himself had nearly lost his own life in rescuing her.

As he approached his hiding-place of the previous evening, the grating *quarks* of some hooded crows warned him of the fate which had already overtaken any of his fowl which had fallen in the open. But he fondly expected to find his well-concealed pile of duck had escaped the crows' unwelcome attentions. Not a bit of it. A perfect golgotha met his eyes. The entire bag of the night before had been dragged out, and partially devoured by the hungry scavengers, the ground for several yards round the spot being literally covered with blood, bones and feathers.

He reckoned that the number of these, with the additional half-picked corpses, which Minette continued to bring to hand from the surrounding marsh, amounted to some forty head of fowl — all ruined by the "darned Danishman," as he called them!

Grouse - The Turn of the Tide

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Though we still have the "required" stock, we have bought ourselves at least 50% more infestation by disease than we can stand!

In this generalised and over-simplified example of a principle lies, I say, the whole essence of stock management. It explains why even in the worst years you *must* shoot (driving) almost as if it were a normal season. You must reduce your stock drastically when its age graph rises. You must endeavour to kill your old birds even at the expense of a proportion of your young. A driving moor which is left unshot in a bad year will require many seasons to recover. Left unshot for two consecutive seasons it will need near a lifetime to come back.

Examples bearing out the truth of these principles are so common as to need no pointing out. As I look round me now I see the great Angus moors, always cared for, always driven and driven hard, about to have one of the best seasons ever recorded. I see the fine moors of Upper Deeside and Donside fair, good or very good almost exactly in proportion, to the care in management and shooting which has been expended upon them in the past. I see, too, moors in the north and west which used to be famous for grouse driving, uncared for, untended and unshot since the war, hoping only to provide a small bag over dogs or walked-up. Others I see well keepered and well burnt, but insufficiently driven in the bad years, hoping in 1957 for what could only be considered a very poor season in the past.

But with disease and disaster in the last few seasons we have had a good clean out of much of the old, bad stock in Scotland generally. Now is the time to start afresh.

Fisherman's Diary

by Coridon

ON many rivers, lakes and reservoirs the "fly only" rule is relaxed in August and spinning is allowed. There are countless waters where spinning is permitted at any time during the season, so it is clear that August can be regarded as the trout spinner's month.

Until the advent of the fixed-spool reel a long apprenticeship of the mechanics of spinning was necessary before mastery could be attained. After that came the problems of what to cast, where to cast it, how deep to fish it and at what speed to recover it. The answers differed with weather, temperature, water level and type of water; and were not, of course, ever fully known to anyone.

Today the mechanics of casting a lure with a fixed-spool reel on wide and unencumbered waters can be learnt in ten minutes. Accuracy in distance and placing requires much more practice, but even so it can be achieved in a tenth of the time necessary with other reels. The other problems remain unchanged, and the good spinner must know just where and how to present his lure.

That is the part of the art of spinning which distinguishes the artist from the plodder. The latter may have perfect control of his tackle, but if he cannot recognise the trout lies and estimate the depth and speed at which his lure must be fished he will never regularly get trout to follow it—and it is the trout which begins by following a lure that ends in the net.

Just as the haphazard casting of a fly will catch an occasional trout, so will haphazard spinning. The latter method may, in fact, catch many trout in well-stocked and easily fished waters, and the angler may thus account himself a good spinner.

It is a vastly different matter on a boulder or weed strewn river of varying depths. Upstream casting with a high degree of accuracy is then necessary, and he who can coax half-a-dozen trout to his lure in an evening's fishing is indeed a good spinner.

Irish Sea Festival

In the 12-day Irish Sea Festival, open to all comers, it was hoped that the long-standing porbeagle shark record (365lb.) might be broken, for it was fished in Keem Bay, Co. Mayo, the scene of the remarkable catch of porbeagles during a fortnight's fishing in 1932, when the record fish was taken.

Instead of the record it was anglers' rods that were broken!

An amazing catch of 5 tons 18½cwt. of fish was weighed in. Great Britain secured 16 awards, Ireland 8, France 4, and Belgium 2. The cup for the heaviest catch in one day went to Mon. Fetis of France (390lb.) and Mr. E. C. Payne of Great Britain won the cup for the best specimen fish.

In this festival one is inclined to think more of the fish that were not caught than of those that were. Nineteen rods were broken by big fish that, hooked far below the surface, never appeared and thus went unidentified, while no guess could be made of their size. It should be borne in mind that the anglers were not amateurs, the French team, for instance, being headed by Mon. E. Touret, President of the Sea Anglers' Federation of France. Nor was their tackle likely to have been poor in quality or insufficient in quantity—but, being required for tournament fishing it was designed for normal and not big game fish.

One angler equipped with shark or tunny tackle might have won awards with a single fish of the unknown species that did the rod breaking.

Wasps

Wasp grubs are an excellent bait for many species of fish including trout. From my experience there should be no shortage of them this year. Already I have had to deal with two nests in a patch of ground about two roods in extent, and this in an area almost devoid of fruit trees and therefore much less attractive to wasps than many others.

Sea Angling Boats

I have several times been asked by prospective buyers what type of boat is best suited to sea angling. This is one of those questions that simply cannot be answered.

One can advise generally on such subjects as length and beam for a crew of from one to four; and on various arrrangements of standard fittings that tend to make angling easier—or, rather, that interfere with the rods as little as possible. Apart from such generalisations everything depends on where and how the boat is to be used.

A lightly constructed craft is quite suitable for estuary and inshore fishing if the boat, when not in use, can be kept in a small-boat harbour, at sheltered moorings, or be hauled up on a hard. A very different type is needed if, when fishing is over, it has to be hauled up a pebble beach to a point above the tide level.

A light boat is safe enough in competent hands if it is used no more than a mile or two off shore, for it would be taken out only in the weather and water conditions suited to it, and if these changed for the worse there would be time to return to base.

Distant marks demand a sound sea-going boat. It takes a long time to pack up gear and return from a mark 8 or 10 miles out, and in that time a nasty sea can get up.

A study of boat types on various parts of the coast shows wide differences in design. These are not due to fancy or caprice. The boats are the outcome of generations of experience on the particular stretch of coast; and they probably cannot be excelled for the tides, winds and currents of that area. It is very unwise to buy a boat until one has studied the type in use on the coastline where it is to be used.

Bloodworms

Most people are familiar with these crimson one-inch lengths of wriggling life if only from the sight of them in a disturbed water butt. They are the larval form of various midges, and it is becoming more and more apparent, as knowledge of fish biology grows, that they are among the most important of all food supplies for freshwater fish.

They breed in countless millions in lakes, moats, pits, ponds and canals, and there is not, it seems, any species of freshwater fish that disdains them. It has long been known that they form a high percentage of the food eaten by mud-grubbing fish such as carp and tench, and their attraction for roach and bream is such that they are banned as bait in many of the angling matches.

They are not an easy bait to use. A 22 or 20 hook is about the right size, and the expert rolls the frail, contorting bloodworm on the tip of his finger, where, for a moment or two, it lies inert, presumably as a result of the rolling process. The hook is inserted once, and that is all. It looks easy, but it is a very skilful trick.

I mention this subject because I have just read an account of local investigations into the food of trout and perch, and in both species bloodworms formed an appreciable proportion of the diet. This was to be expected in small fish, but the content was surprisingly high in fish 10 or 12 inches in length. All small freshwater fish, including pike, eat whatever bloodworms they can get, but fish large enough to deal with sizeable minnows and sticklebacks do not neglect their bloodworm intake.

Bitterling

Since I mentioned swan mussels a short time ago I have learned a good deal about them from various sources—but no one has yet told me whether or not swans eat them. It was suggested that, as several species of duck consider them a delicacy, I might have mistaken ducks' preening places for those of swans. That might well be, for there were plenty of mallard on the water in question, and I was more interested in the mussel shells than in the discarded feathers.

While chasing information about mussels I came across a sentence in a recently published and admirable book on pond life which gave me another puzzle. The book is written primarily for children and gives suggestions for aquarium management. The sentence reads: "There is another mussel called *Unio;* it is a little smaller and thinner than the swan mussel. A small fish called a bitterling lays her eggs inside the shell, and there they hatch in safety. If you want to breed bitterling, you will need to have unio mussels in the aquarium with them."

I can find no reference to bitterling in any book on fishes that I possess, ancient or modern. The Oxford Dictionary knows it not. Its obviously Teutonic derivation sent me to Muret-Sanders, but they are silent on both the German and English sides of their dictionary. Yet the fish is mentioned as a commonplace matter in an up-to-date book on British pond life. I can only think it is an importation of the aquarium specialists, and I am woefully ignorant of exotic aquarium species.

August Flies

Nights are drawing in appreciably and although there is a reasonably long evening there is now no need to stay out until an unreasonable hour in order to tempt trout with imitations of the sedges—the cinnamon sedge, for example—which are at their best when the light has faded almost into darkness.

It is at the time of deep dusk that one often hears the sound of trout rising under overhanging trees and bushes, particularly after a hot and airless day. Many such trout are of a size that do not readily feed on the surface during the day, and in ten minutes a fortunate angler may take a brace that exceeds the results of all his hours of daylight casting.

I mention sedge imitations, but any large and large-bodied fly is likely to succeed, and I have caught fish in these circumstances on self-tied horrors that resemble nothing in nature. No doubt the trout mistake them for caterpillars or other grubs that fall from the foliage above them. Useful flies for this sort of fishing can be made simply by winding wool round the shank of a No. 7 or 8 hook, increasing the diameter towards the eye until in shape it is like the grayling grasshopper. This is not art, but it catches fish.

Detergents

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel.
—Tennyson. "The Brook."

Gundog News

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON, Herne Common, Herne Bay, Kent

THE American aspect of gundogs will occupy most of my article this week. *The Shooting Times* is quite widely read in the U.S.A. by shooting and field trial enthusiasts, and I have made many good friends over there through my articles, many with whom I correspond frequently and several I have met when they have been in this country.

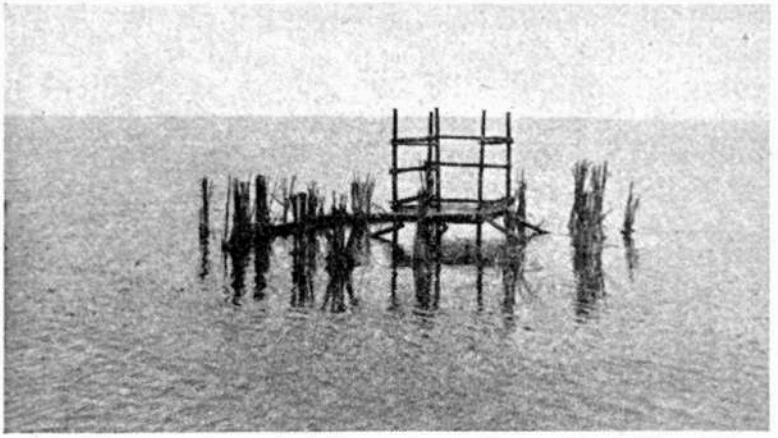
It is always interesting to learn about shooting methods and requirements in other countries, especially as nowadays so many gundog kennels in Britain are interested in the American market. Although it has been said that this American market has been responsible for altered conditions and requirements so far as our own field trials are concerned, I cannot help feeling that it has also done an immense amount of good. Not only financially (to individuals and the country in general), but also by giving many of us an incentive to train our dogs to a higher standard (albeit a somewhat *different* standard, maybe) and, most important of all, by encouraging us to pay more careful attention to breeding from the right strains.

My recent references to wildfowling dogs has brought a most interesting letter from a friend in Virginia. This sportsman is one of the leading industrialists in the U.S.A. and also has vast business interests over here. His hobby and ruling passion are shooting and gundogs, and he is a practical and experienced man where both are concerned. In his letter, which I reproduce hereunder, he gives an interesting description of the duck shooter's requirements as regards dog work in the U.S.A., and as I have three labrador puppies in training for him at the present time I shall find his suggestions most valuable. Readers who also have dogs destined to work in the U.S.A. will therefore find particular interest and assistance in his remarks.

"You ask for opinions on handling dogs for duck shooting. In this country 'wildfowl hunting' is quite different from that in England. Walking along the marsh or mudflats and finding birds which fly up is the exception rather than the rule; in fact there is practically none of that in this country. Here we generally hunt from a 'blind,' built out on water with open water and reeds around, and so camouflaged to look like part of the reed-patch. Outside the blind, floating on the water, we usually have around twenty or thirty wooden decoys. Also we employ a 'duck call' to lure the birds down when a flight is passing over.

All Day in a Blind

"We usually go to the blind (either by wading or having a flat-bottomed boat to take us out) early in the morning, say around five o'clock, taking along sandwiches and coffee, and stay out there all day or until we are through shooting, having filled our quota of possibly eight or nine duck. Of course, many hunters go out again in the evening. Then, too, one must take into consideration such circumstances as heavy, rainy weather, freezing temperatures, and unusual flights of birds, which give you shooting in the middle of the day. In the blind we keep our heads down, must not let 'the whites of our eyes' be seen, and we want a dog that will lie down on the bottom, not shove up his head in the blind. Most of us take along a rubber sheet or an old blanket to throw over our dog to keep him warm. We find that if a dog is warm he isn't so inclined to whimper or get restless while he is sitting there for two hours or more at a time. Under usual circumstances birds won't be coming in at regular intervals, so the hunter usually sits and waits, talking to his dog. Naturally he does not want his dog to be making any noise.



The building of a duck blind—the platform, and skeleton of the "reed patch" beginning to "put on flesh."

"As to retrieving, we definitely do not want a dog to break out and try to get a bird immediately after the first flight. That is the reason we handle our dogs so much—as you call it, 'sheep-dog' them. It is not likely that the dog will have seen half the birds drop, and when he is turned loose to retrieve it is necessary to assist him, showing him where the birds have dropped, rather than allow him to search on his own, using up all his stamina swimming about in the water or plunging and wading through mud and reeds.

Trained To Jump In

"Along the east coast, the water around the blinds may often be three to five feet deep, so one has to have a dog trained to jump into the water rather than one that only walks into it; in other words, a dog that will jump or plunge into the water. A good duck dog brings his duck to the blind, allows the hunter to reach down and take the bird out of his mouth, grab him by the scruff of the neck and haul him up into the blind. Then he is given another hand direction and sent to another area to work. In the Middle West, of course, the blinds are on the edge of the lakes, and the water is much more shallow and the dog wades in. But we still prefer the dog to stay quiet until we are sure there are no more flights of birds.

"I quite agree with you as regards a dog running in to fall if you are out on rough shooting, particularly quail shooting. I would say that about 90 per cent of pointers run in to retrieve, if they retrieve at all. We find that if you don't let a pointer retrieve right away, he is not very good at going out and looking for quail or pheasant later. By that time his mind is back on hunting again. Now there are a few of us who have what we call 'class' dogs; I think I have two pair.

Honouring Each Other's Points

"When you have a pair of dogs, and one is honouring the other's points, we find that if you let them run in, you will very shortly have your dogs where they will not honour each other. For that reason, we try to restrain the dogs, if necessary a minute or half minute, and then turn them both loose to retrieve. There is a little jealousy as to which one gets the bird first . . . I realise that our method of hunting in this country is much different from hunting in England, but I feel that you will appreciate the information in giving the additional training that my pups will have to have . . ."

It will be seen from the above that, in some respects, our American cousins are more particular than we are about their dogs. My correspodnent apears, however, to think that our wildfowlers just walk about the marshes and mudflats in the hope of flushing duck. This is far from being the case. Although many of us may, from time to time, walk the banks of rivers, streams and dykes in the hope of obtaining a shot, the great majority of wildfowlers lie in wait for their birds. In some circumstances no hide or pit may be necessary, for the shooter can take advantage of natural cover — the sea-wall, reeds or bushes, for instance, and rely to a large extent upon camouflaged clothing.

Mostly, however, our wildfowlers either construct a "blind" of some sort or dig a pit. Certainly there are few spots where it is either necessary or posible to have blinds *on* the water, although quite a lot of men do shoot from boats of one type or another. I know of one or two large, preserved duck shoots, where the shooting is very similar to that described by my American friend, the guns being rowed out to hides constructed on the water. The use of decoys and duck calls seems very small over here, either because the shooters do not find them necessary, or have not the time, patience and "know-how" to use them. I often thing that we could improve our duck shooting by making use of both, in many instances.

My correspondent's letter states very clearly the case for the retriever which *can be handled*. As I mentioned last week, the Americans, quite rightly, state that you cannot expect a dog to handle on water if it will not do so on land. Most retrievers are used as duck dogs in the States, and most trials contain very stiff water tests—in fact, they are really water trials, hence their dogs have to handle efficiently and quickly. I have frequently been surprised by the indifference shown by the average shooter over here towards directing his dog by command and signal. Indeed, as my friend mentions, it is apt to be disparaged over here and sneered at as "sheep-dog" work.

It surely stands to reason that for efficiency and time saving, to say nothing of temper-saving, it pays to have a dog capable of

being directed to within sight or scent of a fall that it has been unable to mark. I made particular reference last week to the dog which could not be got across water and handled out on the opposite bank. Inability of dogs to do just this must have wasted more time, and caused more temper and frustration on the part of British duck shooters than almost anything else. Although we may not shoot on or near such vast stretches of water as do American duck hunters, I still maintain that it pays to have a dog which will handle on water as well as on land, especially if you are a keen wildfowler.

The question of the bold dog which will plunge unhesitatingly into deep water is quite an important one to any duck shooter, British or American. Certainly it is not every dog which can be encouraged to take a flying leap into a deep and fast-moving stream or river, but most enthusiastic water dogs will, sooner or later, delight in diving in from quite a height. It is mostly a matter of enthusiasm and experience, and every wildfowler training his dog should pay particular attention to this aspect of water work.

I note with interest my correspondent's remark about hauling-in the dog by the scruff, for I have frequently been astounded (particularly at trials) by the obsession on the part of some handlers and judges that the dog should negotiate a steep and slippery bank unaided, in much the same way that some judges will insist upon a dog jumping even a dangerous barbed-wire fence rather than receive assistance from its handler to prevent injury. Of course a dog should be helped up a steep bank from the water if it is possible to do so, and over a dangerous fence. I have seen young dogs get really panicky because they have had serious difficulty in climbing out of the water, and to allow this sort of thing to continue unnecessarily is extremely foolish. It unnerves a sensitive dog and also exhausts any dog, and may reduce its enthusiasm for water work considerably. Dogs remember unpleasant experiences, just as we do, and such an occurrence might even tend to make a youngster reluctant to face water, let alone take a flying leap into it.

Effects of Restraint

The references to dogs running in when rough shooting are interesting, and readers will note that where pointers retrieve at all they are usually allowed to run in for a very good reason—that they will lose interest if restrained for too long. One will find this tendency with any dog which is not too keen on retrieving. I have had both spaniels and retrievers in training which would quickly and efficiently retrieve the dummy or anything if they were permitted to run in to it. Restrain them for half a minute or more and they had either forgotten about it or lost interest in it. This fact, and also the desire to retain pace, style and enthusiasm, is the reason why I consider it a cardinal training error to insist too early that a dog waits before being allowed out to collect.

My correspondent's "class" pointers must surely be very good dogs indeed, for he can evidently let them both go to retrieve together, and jealousy creates a spirit of competition among them. I think that few men would be anxious to send out two retrieving dogs at the same time for the same bird, as there is always the risk of a tug-of-war, damage to the bird and permanent undesirable result to the dogs as far as "mouth" is concerned.

It would be extremely interesting to me, and, I am sure, to other readers, if my American friend could find time to enlarge upon his experiences and ideas as regards training pointers as "all-rounders," and to tell us the effect that retrieving has upon their steadiness or staunchness on point, and if they are encouraged thereby to take an interest in footscents rather than body scents. I am also very eager to know what a pointing dog does when out hunting and comes upon a wounded or dead bird—does it retrieve or get on with its questing. Conversely, if sent out to retrieve a "runner," does it ignore an unshot bird or a covey and get on with working out the line, or does it drop everything else and come up on point? It might not matter much except that, should the dog be out of sight, it must be aggravating for the waiting handler to think that his dog is probably pointing staunchly whilst a winged pheasant is legging it into the next county!

Clay Pigeon Shooting

Fixture List

Aug. 10: Nottinghamshire D. T. L. Championship, Cavendish G.C., Forest Town. 2.30 p.m.
Aug. 10: Capt. Wright Memorial Cup, Strangford Lough Wildfowlers' Association, Ulster C.P.S.A.
Aug. 10: Blackpool G.C. President's Day Shoot.
Aug. 10: Billingsley and Chorley G.C. West Midland D.T.L. Championship and Open D.T.L. Shoot.
Aug. 11: Surrey and Hampshire Skeet Championship, Grange G.C., Tongham, Surrey. 1 p.m.
Aug. 11: Kent Skeet Championship, Wormshill and Lynsted C.P.C., Preston Hall, Maidstone. 10.30 a.m.
Aug. 11: Royal Oak C.P.C., Cratemans Farm, Cowford, Sussex. D.T.L. and D/Rise. 10.30 a.m.
Aug. 12: West Sussex G.C., Goodwood, Chichester. Skeet Practice. 6.30 p.m.
Aug. 14: Coventry and District G.C., Binley. Practice Shoot. 7 p.m.
Aug. 14: Birmingham G.C., Brockhill Lane, Redditch. 6 p.m.
Aug. 15: Bedford and District G.C., Elstow. Tyro Cup and Club Championship.
Aug. 16: Childrey C.P.S.C., The Plough, Little Coxwell, Faringdon, Berks. Club shoot. 6 p.m.
Aug. 17: Hayfield G.C., Derbyshire. Members' Shoot. 2 p.m.
Aug. 17: Bowland and District G.C., nr. Clitheroe, Lancs. Open Shoot, D.T.L. and Skeet.

* * *

Reports and Results

Clay Pigeon Shooting results at the N.R.A.'s 88th Bisley Meeting.

July 13, Bisley Gun Club's Open Event, over 50 birds:

Class "A": 1, W. Forsyth Whaley, 96 points ex 100 (48 kills); 2, H. F. Sherwood, 93 (49); 3, R. A. Denham, 92 (47).

Class "B": 1, H. B. Readings, 91 (48); 2, R. Walker, 90 (46); 3, N. E. V. Dance, 89 (45).

Bisley Championship, over 60 birds shot between July 13 and 20 (10 single barrel, 20 normal, 10 silent rise, 10 crossing birds, and 10 sporting pairs).

I.C.I. Challenge Cup, miniature cup and added prize: 1, J. A. Baigent, 109 points ex 120 (sporting 18); 2, R. A. Denham, 109 (sporting 16); 3, P. Stanbury, 107.

The result of the tie was decided by the scores made in the sporting pairs, in accordance with the rules of the N.R.A.

* * *

The **Bedford Gun Club** Home Counties Skeet Championship was shot on a hot, sultry, windless July 6, when guns were sometimes too warm for comfort. Shooting was nevertheless of high order.

Chairman E. T. Peacock introduced vice chairman Don Purcell who welcomed the visiting guns and introduced Mrs. G. A. Morin who kindly gave away the prizes as follows:

Class A: 1, A. Morin; 97 x 100; 2, E. T. Peacock, 96; 3, L. J. Ervin, 96; 4, M. Tindol, 96. The shoot-off of the 96s went to three rounds for a decision. Class B: 1, A. E. Halsey, 92; 2, T. H. Saunders, 92; 3, G. Woodford, 92; 4, D. Allingham, 91.

Class C: 1, G. J. Williamson, 37 x 40; 2, G. A. Purser, 33; 3, C. Tookey, 32. 20-bore event, 60 birds, Class A: 1, M. Tindol, 57; 2, A. Morin, 55. 40 birds, Class B: 1, E. P. Tonks.

A special coat badge is now awarded for 20 straights with the small bores 20 and .410. And those guns who have made their straights with the 20-bore may collect from the Secretary, H. C. Hill on their next visit, namely Messrs. Purcell, Morin, Tindol, Pratt, Nickols and Ervin. The .410 and 20 bore events are shot on alternative championships. It is the .410 events' turn at the next 100 bird shoot on Saturday, August 24, the Beds. Autumn Skeet Championship.

Another class will be added on this shoot to break up the 15 per cent spread of Class A from 85 per cent to 100 per cent, namely Class A.A. 93 per cent to 100 per cent. Also call skeet ("pull" for high house and "mark" for low house) instead of silent skeet will be the rule, as a trial, as this is fairer to shooter, referee and the equality of the competition. Only one man can decide when he is ready to shoot and that is the shooter himself. It is too much to expect one referee to decide 2,000 times in one day for 100 different guns, when every bird should be pulled, which is what occurs in a big shoot.

Grouse Over Dogs

(Continued from page 625)

worse for that. It may also be argued that the shooting is inclined to be monotonous, but again this is not strictly true. Shooting is always what you make it and it is as easy to miss a bird going away as one coming towards you. If you are half-way up a hillside shooting across a valley trying to pick your birds it can be as good a sport as any and requires a really good shot to bring them to earth effectively every time.

The answer is, of course, that it is quite impossible to compare shooting over dogs with shooting at driven game. In essence they are entirely different. The whole charm of dogging lies in watching the dogs work. Whatever breed of dog they may be matters very little, so long as they work well. There will always be people who will appreciate this and, conversely, those who do not, just as in the hunting field the true followers of hounds enjoy watching hounds work, while others are more concerned with jumping fences, or peacocking and coffee-housing at the meet or covert side.

Amongst my friends I have the good fortune to number a headkeeper who started over sixty years ago as a small boy of eleven. Just how many years over sixty is his secret. His first job then was holding the two spare couples of dogs and following up across the moor behind the two guns while the headkeeper worked the other pair of dogs in front. He must have taken many a tumble in the tussocky heather and bog as he was towed, a small battling figure, behind the dogs straining to be at their work and all pulling in different directions.

It is apparent from his descriptions of the days held then, when dogging was beginning to go into eclipse, that the sport has changed very little. Subsequently driven shooting became so common as to lead writers in the twenties to talk of the "decadence of dogging," but to hint, even then, that, as a result of the war and financial necessity, dogging might again come back into its own. In view of the present financial pressure on sport and the increase in dogging it looks as if their prophesies might at last be coming true.

Whatever may be the day, however, whether dogging or driven, whether it rains or snows, or even if a thick mist covers the ground as it may well do in this uncertain climate of ours; even if it is blowing half a hurricane, there will always be certain intrepid sportsmen who will sally forth on the Twelfth and the next day gourmets in New York will be reported as having eaten freshly flown in "Scottish" grouse. The first shots of the season will have been fired. Yes. It still means something. If nothing else it reminds me that it is high time I bought a new shooting coat.

It is not surprising that these plain, rectangular vehicles are becoming increasingly popular.

The Bedford Utilabrake and Workobus

by Our Motoring Correspondent

THE Bedford Van is an extremely efficient piece of motor engineering by Vauxhall Motors Ltd., of Luton.

In their own words: " Here is a van designed from first to last for the work it has to do. No false streamlining . . . no awkward obstructions to reduce load space. The modern functional shape means that every cubic foot can be used profitably."

These plain, rectangular vehicles, with the short, snub-nosed bonnet and sliding doors, are becoming more and more familiar on the roads, and it is not surprising when one considers their many advantages.

Powered by a four-cylinder, o.h.v. " square " engine of 1,507 c.c. capacity, the Bedford performs all it is to asked to do without fuss or flamboyance, and considering its horsepower, with a pleasant degree of economy, giving 27 to 30 m.p.g. at normal work.

The dashboard, as one would expect in a van, makes no pretence at the elegance of a saloon car, and is strictly utilitarian, having only two dials, the one the speedometer and mileage recorder, and the other the fuel gauge, oil and ignition indicators and engine theremometer, which, with the two-speed wiper switch, complete the instruments. For some reason, obscure to me at any rate, the starter switch is on the floor beneath the driver's seat, but inaccessible to the feet, thus causing one to bend down and grope with the hand, an unnecessary inconvenience, particularly to the more corpulent motorist.

Three In Front

By reason of the forward position of the front seat and the fact that the greater part of the engine protrudes into the cab under the dashboard in the centre, and what would normally be mud-guards on either side, one gains the impression, at first glance, that leg room will be restricted, but this is not the case and three of us sat comfortably in front for some time without treading on each other's toes, in any sense.

In action, one is inclined to forget that one is driving a van, so light yet firm are the steering and the brakes. With the short wheel-base (7ft. 6in.) and semi-forward control the van is exceptionally easy to manœuvre and can be turned about in a 35ft. roadway without reversing.

The suspension, independent front and semi-elliptic rear, is, of course, stiffer than in a saloon car, but gives a comfortable ride on both road and track, where the short wheel-base and high clearance make light of ruts and potholes. A market gardening acquaintance of mine, a highly satisfied Bedford owner, assures me that in the worst of mud and winter conditions his van behaved as normal without any tendency to skid or bog down.

On the road, low gear is unremarkable, but second takes one with ease and assurance from 10 to 35 m.p.h., and in top one can cruise in comfort and safety at 45 m.p.h. I reached 55 m.p.h. with ease, and though the speedometer modestly stops at just above 60, I am confident that this is well within the vehicle's scope.

No Purchase Tax

My reason for selecting the Utilabrake and Workobus from the very wide range of conversions made by Vauxhalls and Martin Walker Ltd., of Folkestone, is patently obvious. With fixed seating for twelve, both are exempt from Purchase Tax, and a saving of something over £280 is a consideration few can ignore.

The Utilabrake has well upholstered seating for six facing forward and six others facing inwards in the rear.

The double width seat beside the driver folds forward and the bench seat for three behind the driver has a hinged centre portion and back rest to give easy access to the interior, to which easy entry can also be made for passengers or a considerable amount of luggage or goods through the wide double doors in the rear. The sliding front doors cannot be bumped into by traffic on the off side or pedestrians on the near, and the three-way ventilating panels in the rear side windows give draught-free air circulation under all conditions. In fact, taking all in all, at about £580, the Utilabrake is an excellent proposition.

For those who require greater cargo space and cannot bring themselves to stack goods on upholstered seats, the Workobus at about £15 less, is the answer. Here the driver and two passengers have individual upholstered seats at the front, while behind are two bench type seats of slatted wood construction down each side, giving a potential goods area of approximately 6ft. x 7ft. x 4ft (the seats included, of course), a useful space indeed, or seating for nine adults to and from a shoot, a job of work or elsewhere.

The Pivotal Ash

by Taproot

ONE classic feature in a pigeon shooting landscape is a single ash tree. Nothing for me is more evocative of harvest pleasures than the tall feathery plumes gently plying beside a field of wheat. After the willow, the ash is the coolest of trees. Its shade is refreshing at times when oak and elm seem to distil a greater heat. I like for perfection—and so do the pigeon—a single, dead branch, spiny and rigid amid the billowing foliage. Such a look-out point can be the pivot of a pigeon shoot, but if the wind is wrong its importance, as I found last week on my first August sortie, may clash with other factors.

I had stopped my car beside a main road to watch pigeon wheeling in from all quarters to a field of wheat bounded by a stream. Like most crops this year, the straw was standing well, except where rooks had crippled a narrow margin alongside a wire fence. Several birds sat on the fence-posts, presumably with full crops, but most new arrivals pitched in a solitary ash overhanging the stream for a look-see before planing down on to the prepared strip.

I judge the prospects of a pigeon shoot less by the numbers of birds present than by a " busy junction " atmosphere with constant arrival and departure. This location had the right look about it. There was a steady filtering to and fro and the birds had that floppy, well-fed harvest gait that awakes in my breast a frankly gluttonous desire to knock them down.

The task now was to get permission. I asked for one day and got it—but no more ; some equally pigeon-hungry boys were expected home from school within a few days.

The risk was wind-direction. The selected day opened with a northwesterly breeze with forecast of a veer to the south-west before evening. This meant that the ash-tree and the crippled strip were on the lee side of the field, a position that seldom pays off. In the windward hedge a row of half-a-dozen oaks suggested a more orthodox position for my hide, but here an absolute verandah of overhanging branches completely shut in the field of fire. With misgivings I chose a dry ditch within range of the ash-tree and got busy with axe and hook to build a well-camouflaged butt.

Fence-Post Decoy

By half-past two I was nicely dug in with one decoy on a fence-post and others in the crippled strip. Within a few minutes, birds were flighting back along the line of the stream, but mostly a gunshot and a half high. Neither then nor later did my decoys exercise any real drawing power. This too often happens on a lee shore. But every now and then a bird *did* top the ash-tree in fair range.

Unfortunately, I made a very bad start missing no less than five out of the first six shots. One of the compensations of middle age is the power to examine one's failings critically (my wife says it isn't) and I soon guessed that I was letting them get too much on top of me. I began taking them farther in front and generally firing with more snap. This proved the remedy, and apart from one more bad patch I did fair justice to some rather long and disappointing opportunities that produced a bag of eighteen by 7 o'clock.

This had been essentially a line-of-flight affair. The birds flew much more in their purposeful winter style than I had expected. The floppy, rosy-breasted corn spirits, hovering moth-like over my decoys will come in due course when the corn is cut.

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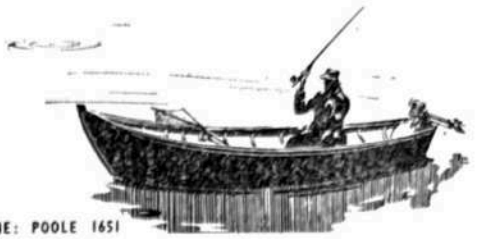

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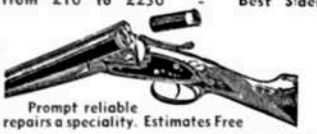

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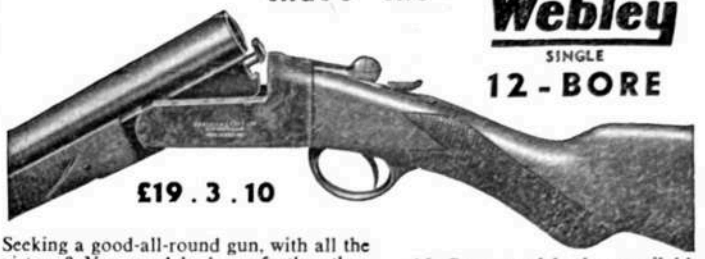

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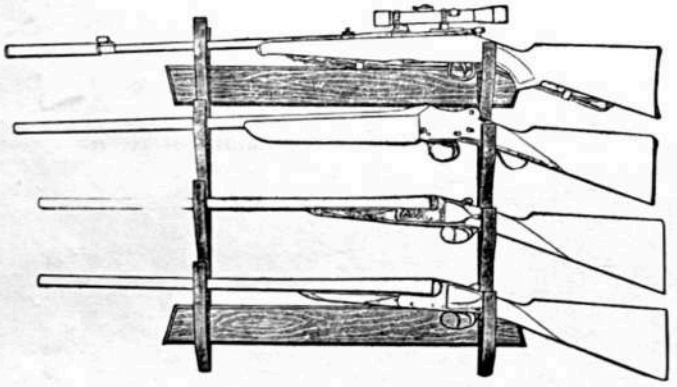

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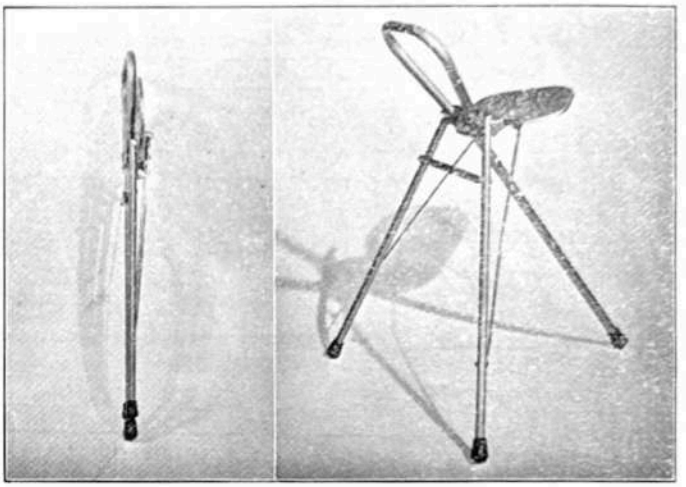

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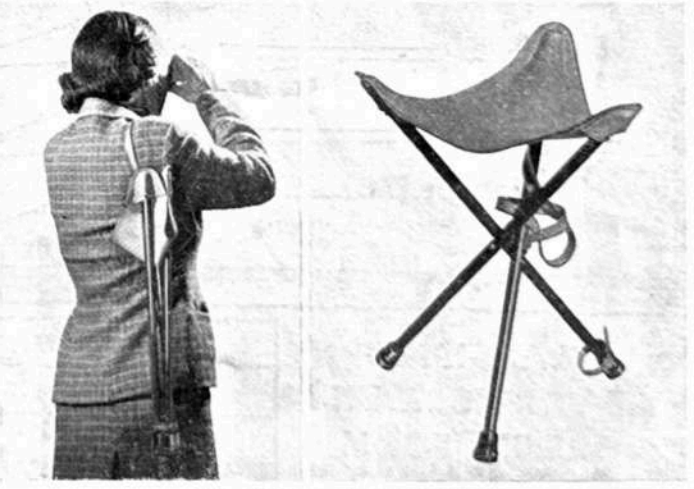

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